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Republic Day Special

Mainstream

V[illegible] XXXI NO 12 SATURDAY JANUARY 30, 1993 Rs 8

I [illegible] ove,
[illegible] e silence of grief,
st[illegible]ed from the snowcapped mountains
to the edges of the sea,
the brow bent,
rivetted on the flowering earth.

The wounds left by the [illegible]
are yet to heal.
[illegible] cords of the heart
[illegible] yet to be tuned.
The world is yet to move back for ever
from the brink of the catastrophe.

The time is broken, uneven,
like a furrowed field.
It's a strain to walk through.
Yet, I know, the seeds lie hidden in its womb.
Our sorrows for this day,
hopes blighted, inconsolable, turbulent,
will shed tears
and join in the festival of the new harvest...

It's our fight now
for the red rose,
our hearts steeled in courage.

Subhas Mukhopadhyay

Gandhiji's 1931 Interview to Indian Students in London

UPENDRA BAXI ◆ M.Y. GHORPADE ◆ ARUN KUMAR ◆ M.V. D[illegible]S ◆ URVASHI DHAMIJA
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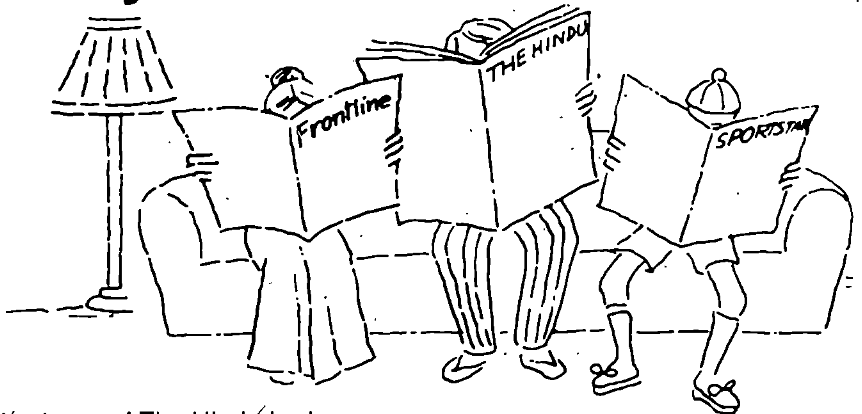

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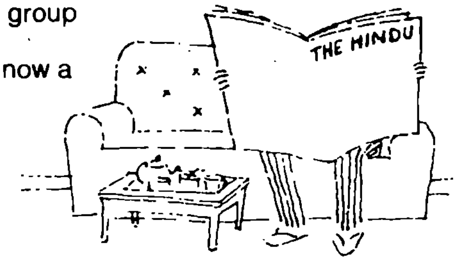

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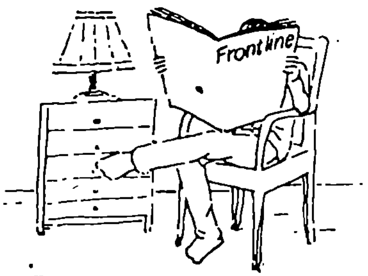

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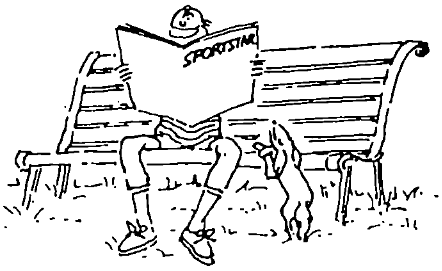

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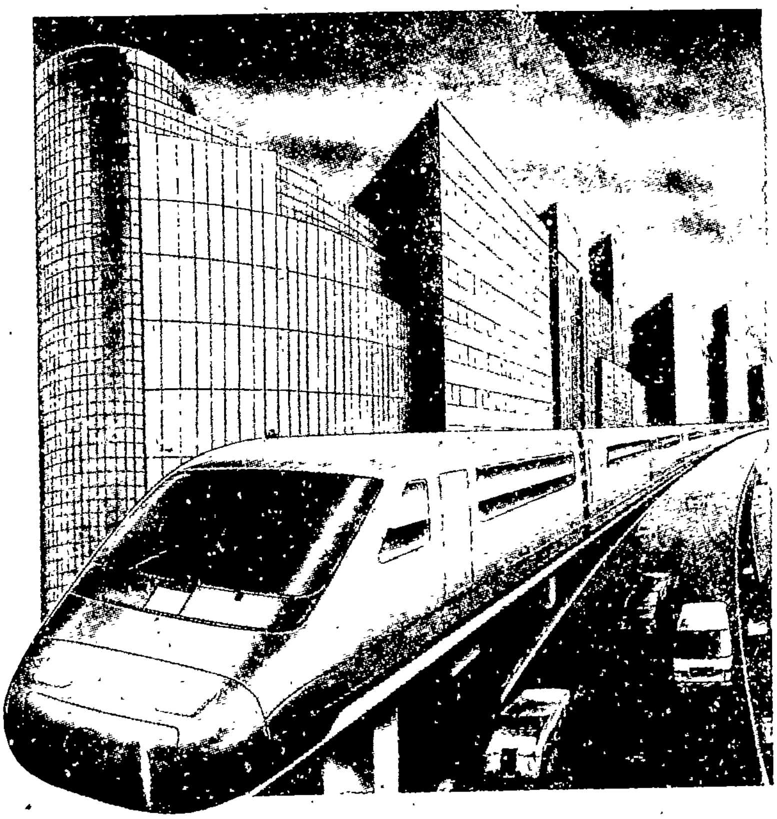

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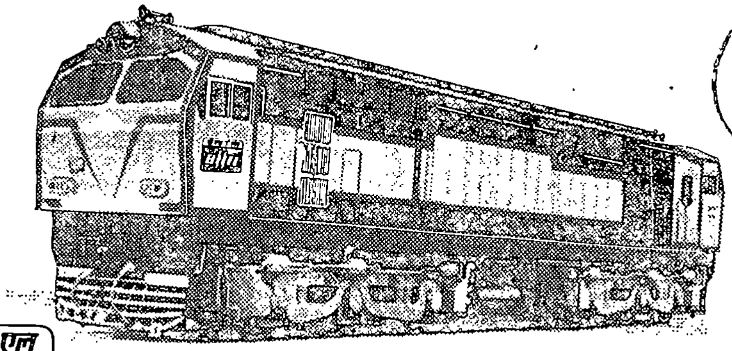

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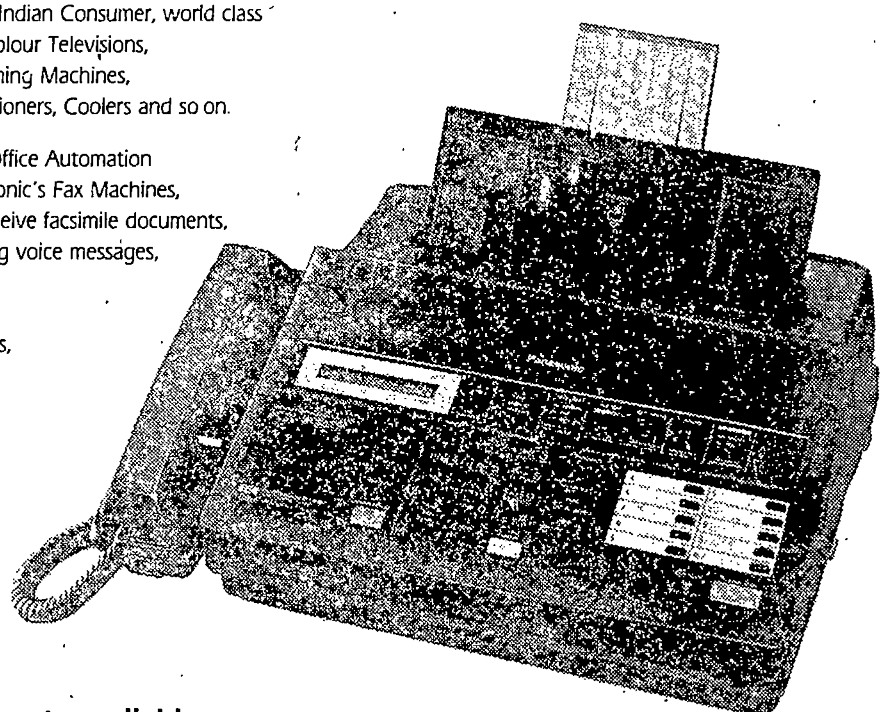

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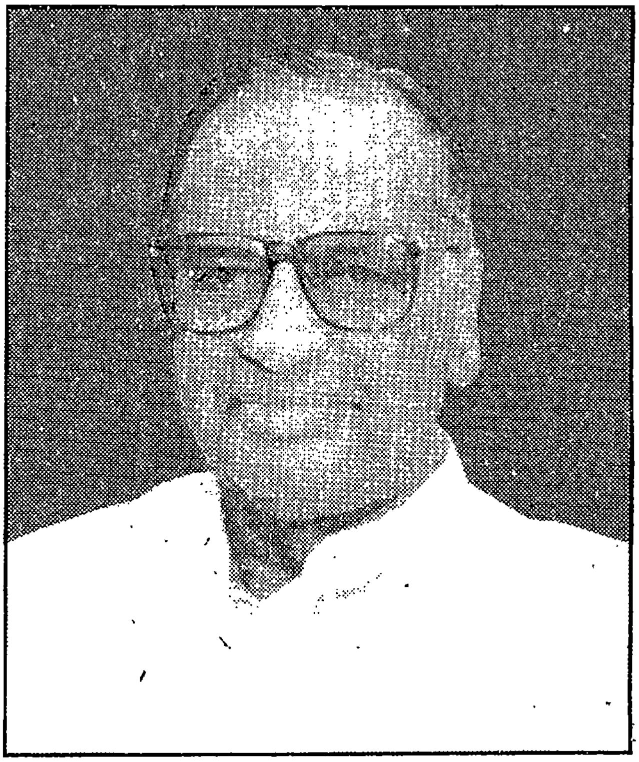

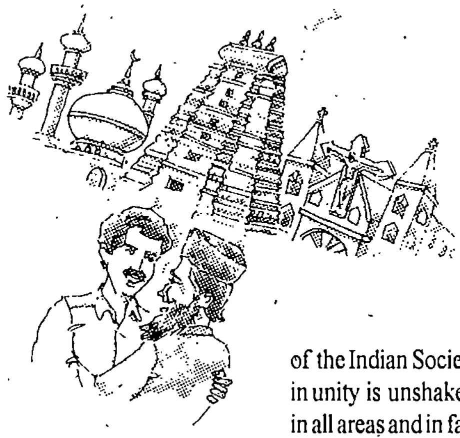

SRI K.VIJAYABHASKARA REDDY

CHIEF MINISTER OF ANDHRA PRADESH

1992 saw many upheavals and many distresses which questioned even our basic fabric as a society and as a nation. Indians faced it with courage and with calm. Though some forces did their best to dislodge the united character of the Indian Society for their own selfish and myopic ends, India has once again proved that its belief in unity is unshakeable. Time has come when we need to look at the methods for faster development, in all areas and in faster alleviation of the suffering of the weak and down trodden. All this will require a congenial atmosphere, which can only be achieved by maintaining peace and harmony. Let us all take a solemn oath to maintain calm and harmony, and give Andhra Pradesh an opportunity to become the most progressive and developed state in the country. Let us make 1993 the ground on which our children will grow, bloom and bear fruit.

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mmediate response to people's complaints.

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EDITORIAL

Save the Republic

This week marks the fortythird anniversary of the proclamation of India as a sovereign democratic Republic through the adoption of a Constitution that became a model for all those striving to build a humane, just, egalitarian society based on democracy, transparency and pluralism. And in this very week we observe the fortyfifth anniversary of martyrdom of one of the tallest figures of the twentieth century—Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the Mahatma, who was instrumental in securing India hard-earned independence from foreign yoke.

The enthusiasm generated by the country's independence as well as the exercise of framing the Constitution strengthened the edifice of our secular democracy that reflected both our diversity and composite culture. In the process the nation's unity and integrity were consolidated thereby promoting stable conditions so essential for the balanced development of our polity.

When the Father of the Nation was gunned down by the insane assassin's bullet on January 30, 1948 the country suffered a terrible trauma, and every democrat of secular credentials was able to realise in a flash the fallacy of having accepted the vivisection of British India on the foundation of the pernicious "two-nation theory" which Gandhiji had personally rejected outright. Yet the Indian people and the leaders who then guided the destiny of the country did not succumb to despair that descended with the Mahatma's murder. Rather, there was allround revulsion at the dastardly act and the killers as well as their associates were socially ostracised by the people in general. The banner of secular democracy was held aloft with renewed vigour in striking contrast to what happened in neighbouring Pakistan where the minorities were accorded the status of second class citizens.

Today, however, the very fabric of our secular democracy is in jeopardy in the face of a sectarian onslaught from those who are intent on dividing the country along communal and religious lines. As a result the Constitution itself is under siege. This constitutes the gravest danger to our Republic since independence. In fact the demise of secular democracy as a result of such an onslaught would instantly bring down one of the main pillars of our Constitution. And that would sound the death-knell of the element of pluralism characterising the society we have inherited from history. In other words, one of the fundamental features of India that is Bharat will disappear and the values on which Indianness or *Bharatiyata* is founded will suffer a mortal blow.

That is why it is imperative to save the Republic from the religious fanatics spreading the venom of hatred, particularly in the name of *Hindutva* that is far removed from genuine Hinduism. Hinduism's universal non-sectarian appeal as a religious philosophy is an anathema to those who are actively involved in the politicisation of Hindusim by abusing the image of Ram through such antics as the Toyota *rath yatra*, not to mention of the demolition of the Babri mosque—all for short-term electoral gains.

Our people have on more than one occasion displayed their innate ability to protect the country and its Constitution. No doubt the struggle now is far more complex and arduous than at any time in the past what with the surge of such sentiments that unashamedly equate Indian nationalism with the Hindu ethos. Thus aspersions are being sought to be cast on the patriotic bonafides of a large body of non-Hindu Indians whose assimilation into the Indian society has vastly enriched our cultural tapestry and engendered genuine *Bharatiyata* or Indianness which biased persons with a one-track approach would never be in a position to comprehend.

In short, if we do not bestir ourselves to defend the Republic and its Constitution with all the strength, logic and rationality at our command, India cannot be rescued from dismemberment. The perspective today is thus to preserve the Republic and its Constitution, the best guarantee of our integrity and unfettered development as a pluralistic society which the protagonists of *Hindutva* cannot countenance.

With this perspective before us it is high time that all people of goodwill come together and pledge to stamp out the fratricidal violence that has engulfed large parts of the country of late. It is an all-out struggle against the regressive forces striving to take us back to the Middle Ages (for which purpose they have unhesitantly struck at the enlightened, modern, liberal and democratic values enshrined in the Constitution). They must be defeated before the dawn of the twentyfirst century. That indeed is what History demands from us--patriotic Indians proud to proclaim our abiding faith in secular democracy.

January 27

S C.

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Cover: The design of the red rose was presented by Satyajit Ray in honour of the World Conference for Peace and International Cooperation in the sixties.
The poem by Subhas Mukhopadhyay from which excerpts have been carried by the side of the red rose is entitled "For the Red Rose".

This Republic Day Special being a little less than double the size of an ordinary number, there will be no issue of Mainstream on February 6, 1993. The next issue will appear on February 13, 1993.

Lead, kindly Light...

Every year we dutifully go through the ritual of offering homage to Gandhiji on the day of his martyrdom.

We shall once again be witnessing the ceremony on January 30 to be conducted as per protocol—early morning prayer at Rajghat, singing of bhajans and hymns, a round of spinning and then during the course of the day, meetings and seminars and a special programme on Doordarshan to remind us of the Father of the Nation. VVIPs encircled by gun-totting security guards will do the round of the *samadhi* marked with the two words that he had uttered last—*Hey Ram*! And there will be the military salute as it is officially celebrated as the Martyrs' Day to remind ourselves of those known and unknown heroes who had laid down their lives in the freedom struggle.

This year, of course, we miss Gandhiji more than ever before as we watch the hideous apparition of the demon of communal violence engulfing city after city, as Hate overpowers sanity in communal killings, forcing thousands homeless, and handing over normal life to goonda gangs or *mastans* linked to political bosses. Not that it all started with Ayodhya December 6. Communal violence has been flaring up here and there all these fortyfive years since he was shot dead. And yet Ayodhya December 6, 1992 has become a watershed in the annals of contemporary India. For, here a place of worship of one faith was demolished by insensate fanatics, bent on building a place of worship of another faith at that very spot. The architects of this campaign say that they are determined to build a grand temple there because they knew that Lord Ram was born at that very spot.

Their plea has been that a general of Emperor Babur had demolished a temple to build a mosque. And so five hundred years later they must, tit-for-tat, demolish the mosque to build the temple—all in the name of Ram, who was the personification of benign tolerance and trasparent candour. It was a short shrift job, the demolition of the mosque by a competent demolition squad coming stealthily under cover of the massive crowd collected by a non-stop campaign. But in the aftermath of that demolition operation, three thousand people lost their lives in distant parts of the country in the tension-charged weeks that followed. Not only the scars of that trail of bloody violence are visible, but the assailants have been freely roaming all over, untouched by the guardians of law and order.

There have no doubt been protests, angry protests, from hundreds and thousands—in speeches and statements, meetings and rallies. And yet with all these stirrings, however belated, for stamping out communalism, in the midst of it all, we miss Gandhiji. And what would he have done had be been living in our midst today? Perhaps the answer to this question might help our leaders to strike out for the right path to meet the challenge of communal hatred.

Those of us who are old enough to remember him have to confess that in those days many of us in our youthful impudence used to think that the frail old man was making too much fuss about Hindu-Muslim animosity, as we fondly believed that the problem would be solved once the British quit our country, since the Raj exploited the principle of divide-and-rule.

But Gandhiji could sense danger ahead. He was not secular in the European sense of the word, in which the secular is meant as opposed to the clerical. Gandhi's view on secularism—a term he rarely used—was that in the Indian context, it should extend equal respect for all religions. Himself a devout Hindu, he insisted that the Muslim must have the same right to pursue his own faith. At the same time he campaigned for the removal of inequities enjoined by Hindu tradition. Hence his campaign for the Harijan's right of entry to any temple, and his insistence on the active involvement of women in the national struggle for independence—both the issues which the orthodox school in the Hindu society has frowned upon to this day.

With his arrival on the national political scene, he sought to unite the Congress with the Muslim League, which in the early twenties culminated in the Congress-Khilafat pact. In the thirties came his tireless crusade against the pernicious British device of separate electorate—keeping the Hindus and the Muslims apart, as also the Scheduled Castes from caste Hindus. While he succeeded in persuading Ambedkar to give up separate electorate and agree to reservation of seats in the legislature for the Scheduled Castes, Gandhiji could not win over the Muslim League for scrapping the system of separate electorate for the Muslims. Few of our political leaders at that time or later could anticipate the danger that the separate electorate system spelt for India's unity. Only Gandhi could foresee it.

Herein lay the seeds of partition. Hence his last-ditch efforts in the forties to come to an understanding with Jinnah and ward off the partition which the British had already planned to impose by exploiting the demand for Pakistan. Gandhiji's last desperate efforts could be seen during the hectic days of negotiations with the British Raj immediately after the end of the Second World War. And when he found he could not convince even his trusted colleagues in the Congress High Command to repudiate the partition plan in the Mountbatten award, he withdrew. The Congress Working Committee took the momentous decision to agree to the country's partition as per the Mountbatten Plan without the advice and consent of the the tallest member of the party.

Gandhiji could foresee the bloodbath that the partition brought, and his entire efforts at that time were directed towards healing the wounds of the partition. It was a one-man crusade which took him to Noakhali, Calcutta and Bihar—a fearless pilgrim traversing the frightening jungle of hatred. And he had planned to go to Pakistan with the same message of harmony instead of hate when he himself fell to the bullet a fanatic Hindu assailant.

For him, the mission was simple, straight as an arrow—since the partition could not be averted, let us concentrate on reinvigorating the urge for Hindu-Muslim harmony and peace. No hatred for Pakistan, but extend the hand of trust and amity and thereby break down the barrier of suspicion and hatred—a far-reaching design for the two communities, for the two countries, to live in harmony and honour.

That's how Gandhiji comes back to us today, alive and beckoning us all to live and let live. To be my brother's keeper was his watchword for building this great land of ours.

Today we miss him most—he with his constant prayer: *Lead, kindly Light amid the encircling gloom...*

January 25 N.C.

Crisis of Governability: A People's Agenda

UPENDRA BAXI

The orgy of violence since December 6 shows no sign of abating; Bombay is still burning: so is Ahmedabad. And, we now witness the creation of internal refugees in areas not affected by what the TADA chooses to describe as 'terrorism'. Thousands of men, women and children are mass migrating from their impoverished habitats in Bombay, Surat and other theatres of carnage; deprived of their uncanny ways of cheating their ways into survival, they seek to begin their lives anew in other areas of darkness in India.

India's troubled bourgeoisie continue, in the face of this horror, debating the same staid recipes: declare 'partial Emergency', dismiss delinquent State Governments, control this 'madness'. Very soon, we will also hear abut a 'White Paper', 'rehabilitation', 'compensation'. Predictably, a commission of enquiry will be established—a form of political insurance against the risk of decisive political action to protect even the bare minimum rights of hapless Indian citizens including the right to immunity from planned aggression, the right to livelihood, the right to live in peace with honest labour supporting oneself and one's family.

It is time to acknowledge that certain politically patronised and protected individuals and groups have already declared a 'partial Emergency' on their own and have virtually 'dismissed' the State Governments. And they have declared a war on what they diagnose as a form of national lunacy called the Indian Constitution and the rule of law. If agents of popular illegalities are 'mad', the rulers also rise above all social control mechanisms in their gory quest for power. Anthropologists used to classify cultures in terms of 'guilt' and 'shame' cultures; in the former, the sense of guilt was a powerful constraint and in the latter loss of face or public esteem motivated responsible action. Most Indian leaders have transcended both guilt and shame, and have thus forfeited their potential to establish peace, order and justice.

Perhaps, India's troubled bourgeoisie are neither sufficiently troubled nor sufficiently bourgeoisie. Otherwise, we would all have realised the stark fact that India has a historic, and partly self-induced, crisis of governability, so much so that the Indian Constitution itself is rapidly becoming a 'disputed structure', and thought eminently eligible for *kar seva*. This magnificient edifice was constructed by the inaugural generation of the midnight's children; subsequent generations weakened it; and the contemporary generation seems poised to give it "one final push". But when constitutions are wrecked by practices of power, the frameworks of just governance are also shattered. No less a person than the Prime Minister, addressing the nation after December 6, stated: "The Constitution lies shattered." And with this also lie wrecked the life-plans of hundreds of thousands of decent, honest, hard-working Indian citizens.

The author is the Vice-Chancellor, University of Delhi.

◆

THE crisis of governability has been nurtured by many forms of political deviance and state lawlessness. Prime among these is a political culture which celebrates the axiom that people holding high political power are above and beyond the law. Critiquing imperial power, Mohandas Gandhi used to say that law is nothing but "the convenience of the powerful". Political leadership in India has shown an exceptional dedication to the Mahatma in proving him publicly right.

Thus, we have witnessed the growth of regime-sponsored violence. Political actors have, by acts of commission and omission, become active partners in violence against the Indian people. Especially since the 1984 massacre, the syndrome of an absentee state has developed; the state agencies look the other way even when grave cognisable crimes are openly committed; police, para-military forces and now even the army talk about the absence of 'instructions' and lack of coordination. Cold-blooded calculations are made in corridors of power about 'permissible' levels of casualties, damage to property and costs of one-time compensation per victim. The 'absence' of the state is itself, however, a form of its presence; and it is this presence which now imperils India's future.

The crisis of governability is also aggravated by the steady rise of political nihilism described by Nietzsche as a process of devaluation of values or making basic values worthless, "like a rivulet that trickles into sand". The "aggressive removal" of values does not necessarily lead to the installation of new ones.

Even ecstatic nihilism, of the December 6 genre, fails to achieve this; as a result besieged values fail to generate loyalty and the allegedly emergent one fail to command consensus. In this interregnum, violence as a means of doing politics arises, making state power even more incoherent. A paranoid political culture, intimidating the intelligentsia and victimising the most vulnerable, prepares the ground for creeping militarisation of politics and authoritarian regimes.

In this cruel zodiac, committed and concerned citizens must do more than retire hurt. Theirs is the task to reorient the practices of politics towards the discipline of the Indian Constitution and its articulate code of just governance. Nothing short of a mass movement, even if bereft of a Mahatma or a Jayaprakash Narayan, is the summons of today's history.

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WHAT could be the mission of a people's movement? The answer is: swift, thoroughgoing, exemplary restoration of responsible politics. To this end, a political education programme to propagate the constitutional values and vision is imperative. For the Indian Constitution is a common heritage, vibrant still with the ideals which animated our struggle for independence.

A national movement of the dimensions of a second freedom struggle is now called for to combat the neo-imperialist tendencies in Indian politics which convert citizens of the republic to subjects and cultivate a more vicious divide-and-rule policy. We should struggle to establish a responsive and responsible governance which would strike at the roots of corruption and anti-people abuse of public power. As to the first, the movement will seek compulsory disclosure of all assets by legislators; pubic audit of party funds; ombudsmen extending to the Prime Ministers and Chief Ministers; autonomous prosecution on charges of corruption by officials. The movement should also assault entrenched abuses of public power such as torture and tyranny by law enforcement personnel who hurt and harm the innocent in riot control and let the known guilty escape with impunity. Structural reform will also be a part of the agenda: implementation of the Sarkaria Commission Report on Federalism, National Police Commission, Jail Reforms Commitee and Law Commission reports. The movement will insist on the amendment of the Constitution to provide a right to information and national norms for restitution and rehabilitation of victims of public disorder, engendered and exploited by the political actors. The movement will ask for the establishment of a permanent people's tribunal with wide powers to investigate all major incidents of violent disorder involving state lawlessness and crimes against Indian humanity.

If Draconian security laws and measures of economic liberalisation could be legislated with lightning speed, there is no reason why we should not demand adoption of some of these measures at an extended budget session of Parliament.

We must overcome our cynicism about the law: it is no more than a programme of social action directed to arrest and control corrupt and despotic abuse of power. But an agenda which begins with these minimalist demands must grow into a full scale public vigilance over local and national micro-fascism of power. The recent events have tragically demonstrated, yet again, that politics is too serious a business to be left wholly to politicians. If we fail to mobilise ourselves at this juncture, we too will count amongst the pall-bearers of Indian democracy. The time for action is now, to recall Schiller: "What is left undone one minute is restored by no eternity." ■

Gandhian Atonement

We are aware that V.P. Singh's credibility is not particularly high. But, in our book, it is certainly higher than that of the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister-to-be. While Narasimha Rao and L.K. Advani, the PM and the PM-in-waiting, paid cursory visits to the city (Bombay)—Rao pointedly refusing to comment on the State Government's performance and Advani on the Shiv Sena's—Singh took it upon himself, at great discomfort and some risk to his life, to sit out an indefinite fast and express his distress.

It was the one single act of sanity in a city gone temporarily mad. In a way, it was an atonement for the sins of all the politicians, both those in Bombay and those who came visiting us.

It is true that nothing concrete has come out of the fast and some people have even dismissed it as an empty and a foolish gesture. But the spirit behind it was Gandhian and at least it took us back to an age when politicians sacrificed their comforts for a cause. And the fact remains that not only did Singh do penance, but he did it in silence, without making statements and claims that he would restore order. It was a gesture for which the city should thank him, not make jokes about.

Behram Contractor in Editor's Diary, *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier*, Bombay (January 21, 1993).

Whither Economic Policy and Performance?

M.Y. GHORPADE

Economic development inevitably involves change but it is economic policy and action which determines the direction of this change, the pattern of growth and the manner in which it affects the lives of people. Economics is concerned not only with figures and statistics but primarily with human development and welfare. It is from this point of view that I would like to look at economic development—past, present and future. It is the basic logic of our development ethos and experience that must not be lost sight of.

Before the advent of the British we had a simple subsistence economy which was self-sustaining and stable though largely static. Population was not increasing at an alarming rate because the conditions of life were hard and there were no modern means to combat disease and pestilence. Poverty was severe and communications were extremely limited. The bulk of the people lived on subsistence agriculture and allied activities, labour-intensive local occupations and traditional skills, such as, handicrafts for which also there was a limited demand. Urban centres were few and growth slow and sluggish. In other words, it was stability at a relatively low level of economic activity. Modern technology enabled the British to subjugate India but it also opened up some vistas of change. The British improved communications, introduced English education and started the industrialisation of India to suit their interests and strengthen their rule. But we became more aware of what modern education and technology could do to increase productivity and performance, though the bulk of the people remained illiterate, superstitious and outside the scope of modern development.

It is only with independence in 1947 that the era of planned development for the nation as a whole commenced under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru who had a clear vision of the future of India. The state had to lay the foundations for a faster and a more equitable growth on the basis of democracy, cooperation and a mixed economy where both public and private enterprise would play a complementary role. Considering what is happening in the world today, this was a farsighted and progressive view or framework which had considerable built-in flexibility and is still valid.

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The broad objective of Indian economic development over the years has been growth with stability, social justice and self-reliance which meant doing things largely on our own, though it did not altogether exclude foreign assistance. This approach did work and enabled the country to move into a new and higher level of economic activity, whatever the extent to which we might have succeeded in achieving our goals. The poverty line today is defined in a particular way but the nature of poverty has undergone a change and is not so hopeless and helpless as it used to be.

However, even after four decades of development, sixty per cent of our people are illiterate and half that number are below the poverty line. But things would have been much worse if the country had not achieved what it did in various fields and much better if we had been able to contain the population explosion which came in the wake of development. Our population increased from 361 million in 1951 to 870 million at present, by 140 per cent, while in the first half of this century it increased from 238 to 361 million, by 52 per cent. In spite of this, there is a qualitative change in our life and capacity to cope with problems. But we have to take more and more conscious decisions and live up to them. In the early years of this century our capacity to destroy nature and our environment was itself limited. Today we have to be more aware and take conscious decisions to protect nature and save our environment from the ravages of uncontrolled development and growth the world over. Thus, change and the options open to us have to be understood in the right perspective and effectively acted upon.

Science and technology enables us to produce more but it is the gathering of this surplus for further adequate investment and the right kind of consumption in the right proportions which is the central problem of economic development. We can succeed only to the extent of our individual and collective will and effort, and the efficient working of the appropriate systems. The market has always been a part of this system though the play of market forces will obviously increase with development and purchasing power in the hands of more and more people. At the same time, the state has also always been there though its role will inevitably undergo a change to suit the changing conditions. That is why the Chinese talk of a socialist market economy. The question is in what proportion and manner the state and the market forces should exist and interact. Obviously, it would be an extreme view to say that there is only the individual and the market. The state cannot wither away and will have a definite role to play, especially in a developing country of the size of India, where so much has to be done for so many in so short a time to reach higher levels of sustainable growth in the foreseeable future. The style and self-reliance of this effort is crucial. Essentially we have to organise and help ourselves and not depend too much on others whose sights will inevitably be elsewhere.

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IF at all India's achievement is to be compared with some other country, it should not be with small countries like Singapore and Taiwan but with a large Asian country like China. Here it must be admitted that in the past four decades China has been able to achieve more in key sectors than India, though the two countries started on the path of planned development in the middle of this century. China's steel production is about 70 million tonnes while ours is still in the region of 16 million tonnes. So also in cement, their production is about four times higher than ours which is about 54 million tonnes. This clearly reflects the relative magnitude of construction going on in China in various fields, especially in house construction to provide decent shelter to their vast population. Even a casual visitor to China cannot fail to notice this in the countryside. So also in the crucial areas of fertiliser and power, their production is two to three times more than ours. The Chinese power generation is more than 600 billion kwh while ours is less than 300 billion kwh. Their coal production is about 1000 million tonnes as against our 200 million tonnes and their crude oil production is about 140 million tonnes as against our 30 million tonnes.

What is most significant is that with only two-thirds of India's cultivable land, China has been able to produce more than double of India's foodgrains, 402 million tonnes in 1987 as against our present production of 176 million tonnes, and achieve a much better distribution of essential commodities, employment and services in spite of considerable variations in natural resources and conditions in the different regions of that vast country. In short, economic growth in China has been more than double that of India with a more decentralised and equitable distribution of the benefits of development.

No doubt the political and other systems in India and China are not the same. China has a system which is strangely described as democratic dictatorship, while in India we have a pluralistic multiparty democracy struggling to unify a society stratified into various castes and creeds. Incidentally, in China 97 per cent of the population belongs to one ethnic group. In India, political competition between parties is not always healthy and proves the point that competition in any field has to be free, fair and meaningful to be beneficial. This does not mean that we could not have done much better even under our conditions and constraints. It also does not mean that the Chinese political system does not give any scope for dissent or discussion. As a matter of fact, they have been able to mobilise considerable people's participation in local institutions for better implementation.

I was in China recently and was impressed by their discipline and sense of social purpose. They have succeeded by and large in providing food, clothing and shelter to their people. Our slogan "*Roti, Kapda aur Makan*" has been better implemented in China. They also make a systematic massive effort to create local employment for the people, both men and women. They take the one child per family norm quite seriously though in Mao's regime the population control norm had been mistakenly neglected. We must, therefore, not close our eyes to the difference in the rate of growth the two countries have been able to achieve in crucial areas, human resource development and employment. In India we must accelerate growth in our own way with maximum emphasis on human resource development and fuller employment.

It is not that what we have been able to achieve in the last 40 years is not significant. Irrigation and food production more than trebled from 22 to 70 million hectares and from 50 to 176 million tonnes respectively, while population more than doubled.

Today nearly 5 lakh villages have been electrified as compared to only 1500 villages in 1947. Similarly, since 1947, the number of irrigation pump sets has increased from 20,000 to about 9 million, power generation capacity from a little over 1000 MW to nearly 80,000 MW, cement from 3 million to 54 million tonnes, steel from 1 million to 16 million tonnes and crude oil from hardly anything to about 30 million tonnes. The number of boys and girls receiving education in schools has gone up from 2 to 15 crores and the life span of the average Indian has doubled from 30 to 60 years. Our scientific personnel is the third largest in the world and we have all the potential to learn any skill and accelerate growth and development both quantitatively and qualitatively. In a vast developing country like India, the benefits of development do not automatically trickle down to the poor but have to be taken to them in the form of education, health, social services, employment and skills. This is where the state and the political apparatus and the administrative system have to intervene and interact with the poorest of the poor, to enable them to develop faster and build decentralised democratic institutions which will sustain this growth.

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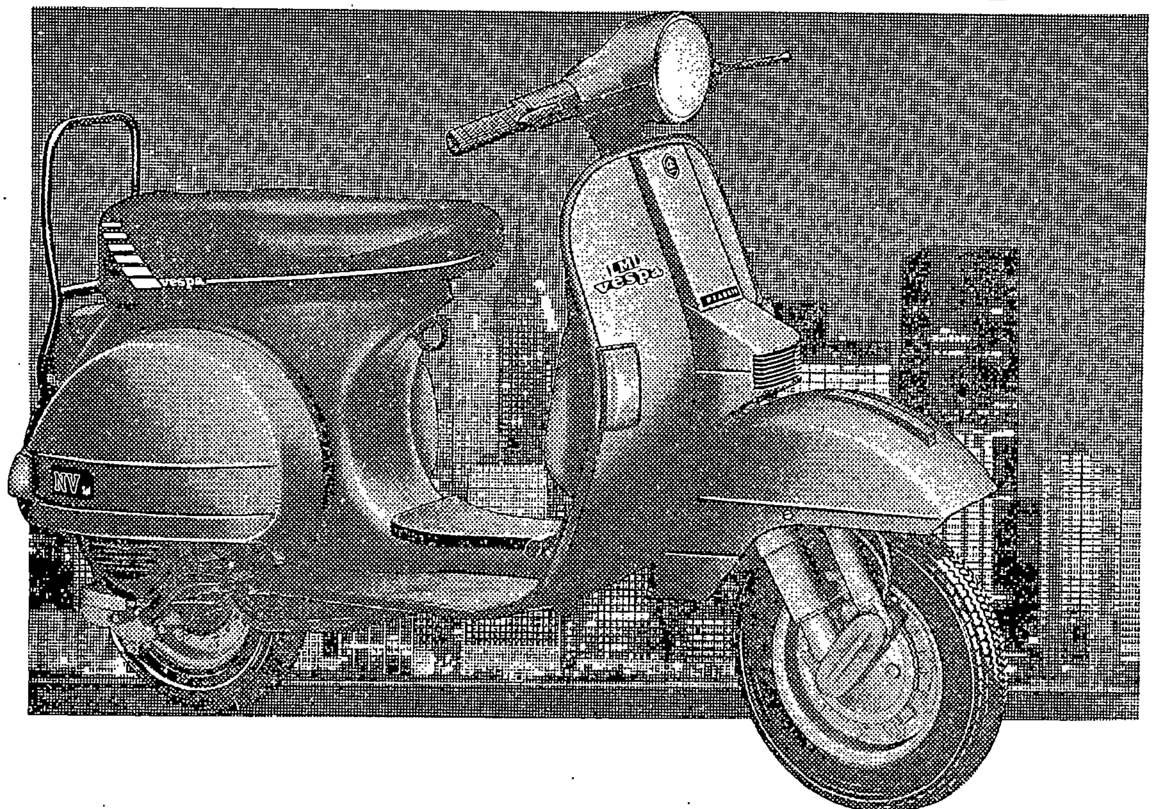
WHAT changes in strategy, pattern of investment and implementation this involves will have to be worked out in greater detail. Obviously, the starting point has to be full employment or near-full employment. Our experience of nearly four decades of planning clearly shows that employment cannot be just a by-product but will have to be planned on a massive scale, starting with the unskilled labour force in rural areas and those who can be employed in agriculture and allied activities, simultaneously planning to impart training for a variety of skills that would be needed in a developing economy. Training for employability and viable organisations for productive employment for all should be our goal.

On the financial side, even during the 1970s, strains were experienced in funding greater development after meeting our debt obligations both at the State and the Central levels. This also contributed to the straining of Centre-State relations. Even when we presented Karnataka's case to the Sixth Finance Commission, we had argued that Plan and non-Plan assistance should be such that all fresh borrowing and resource mobilisation effort should be available for fresh development and that all States should be enabled to have a plan which is larger and more equitable in terms of need and effort. The basic problem is that both the Centre and the States have been indulging in borrowing on the assumption that increased development will create adequate capacity to repay. But we do not seem to have paid adequate attention to this crucial assumption, especially in the 1980s, and allowed things to drift perilously close to the debt trap, endangering both stability and self-reliance. We do not seem to have fully realised that borrowing does not automatically create the capacity to repay and keep the economy on an even keel. This is what is generally described as living beyond our means or not doing enough to ensure that things worked the way we wanted them to work.

Our internal public debt increased from Rs 50,000 crores in 1980-81 to Rs 300,000 crores in 1990-91 and our external debt increased from Rs 60,000 crores to Rs 220,000 crores during the same ten-year period. In 1990-91, the fiscal deficit of Rs 44,650 crores amounted to eight per cent of the GDP as compared to four per cent of the GDP in the 1970s. The fiscal deficits which were met by borrowing resulted in the internal public debt of the Central Government going up from 36 per cent of the GDP in 1980-81 to 55 per cent of the GDP in 1990-91, the interest alone being four per cent of the GDP and almost 20 per cent of the total expenditure of the Central Government. It is a staggering fact that the interest alone amounted to about Rs 28,000 crores in 1991-92 while defence expenditure was Rs 16,000 crores. What was more alarming was that the revenue deficit was as high as Rs 17,000 crores in 1991-92, clearly indicating that we have been meeting revenue expenditure by borrowing and not generating any revenue surplus to meet at least a part of the capital expenditure. This, in short, is the true face of our fiscal problem which we have accumulated over the years and accentuated by our profligacy in the 1980s.

If one looks at the figures of our imports and exports and trade balance during 1950-51 to 1991-92, one finds that upto 1978-79 our negative trade balance hardly exceeded Rs 1000 crores and averaged about Rs 700 crores during the 1970s and Rs 500 crores during the 1960s. But during the 1980s the average negative trade balance shot up to Rs 6700 crores and was as high as Rs 10,640 crores in 1990-91. This was also the period when liberalisation was being increasingly attempted in the hope that liberalisation itself will automatically find the solutions to the problems it creates. The result was that the country had to face a serious foreign exchange

INTERNATIONAL BREAKTHROUGH



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crunch and balance of payments crisis which had to be averted to save our credibility. In the middle of 1991, when our foreign exchange reserves dipped to Rs 2400 crores or just two weeks' imports, the NRIs or the non-resident Indians were withdrawing their funds from India at an alarming rate, as the commercial heart does not lay much store by historical affinity.

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UNDER these circumstances, the government perhaps had little option but to take the IMF loan with its conditionalities. It may, however, be recalled that when R. Venkataraman was our Finance Minister, he had negotiated an IMF loan without these conditionalities, though it was not fully utilised. A loan may help to avert a crisis, but is not a certain solution to solving the basic problem of generating growth and ensuring our capacity to repay. Incidentally, India should not hesitate to negotiate the restructuring and reduction of her international repayment obligations, especially when it has been done for some other countries without any greater justification. However, it does seem paradoxical to negotiate an external loan to tide over an immediate foreign exchange crisis and, at the same time, not utilise external assistance which is available. Our foreign exchange reserves would not have gone up to $ 6 billion without the loan.

However, the World Bank in its recent report pointed out that it had cancelled an unutilised loan of $ 1.45 billion, and asked the government to ensure speedy utilisation of accumulated undisbursed assistance of over $ 22 billion or Rs 66,000 crores. It states that our total external debt increased from $ 20 billion in 1980-81 to $ 73 billion in 1991-92, and the undisbursed aid trebled from about $ 7 billion in 1980-81 to $ 22 billion in 1990-91. The report also significantly points out that the root cause of India's vulnerability to liquidity problems lies in the composition of India's debt and excessive dependence on commercial borrrowing and volatile NRI and other short-term deposits.

All this makes two things very clear. We must borrow only to the extent necessary and we must utilise the borrowing properly by completing projects on time. We must also make sure to increase our distance from the debt trap; otherwise more and more of borrowing will go for repayment and not for fresh development, thereby not only postponing the evil day but increasing the magnitude of the danger to our economy. Thus, it is not a question of being for or against liberalisation. Assuming that our economy, like every other, requires some correctives or treatment, the question is what medicines to administer and in what doses, depending on a total view of our health and personality. Every nation has its own history and experience which cannot be ignored or forced into a straitjacket. No doubt the loan givers are entitled to give advice but it is bad for the self-respect of a country if every little decision appears to be dictated from abroad and subservient to their perceptions or prescriptions.

Devaluation is a common prescription but cannot be depended upon to automatically correct the balace of payments which depends on a number of factors such as inflation and production at home and recession or buoyancy abroad. While improving the rupee price of our exports, it also makes imports more expensive. It is generally admitted that devaluation cannot be resorted to often and its effect could be quite limited under certain circumstances. Devaluation was followed by the policy of exim scrips and then partial convertibility of the rupee, whereby an exporter converts 60 per cent of his export earnings at market rates and 40 per cent at the official exchange rate, which was to take care of essential imports such as oil, fertilisers, edible oil, life saving drugs, etc., while the other 60 per cent would take devaluation a step further and be self-adjusting in the sense of limiting imports to available export earning at market rates of exchange.

If full convertibility is introduced on the trade and current account it would impose a heavy burden even for the essential unavoidable imports. Convertiblity on the capital account would be a hazardous step which cannot and should not be attempted in a hurry. There is nothing sacrosanct about convertibility. A recent study shows that of the developing and developed countries only a few have introduced full convertibility both on the current and capital accounts. The basic problem with regard to convertibility is the uneven and unequal strength of different economies with regard to the balance of payments. But some stability in exchange rates is required for orderly growth of industry and trade.

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DURING the 1980s we did rely too heavily on short-term borrowings to finance the balance of payments deficits, which were accentuated towards the end of 1990 mainly because of higher payments for oil imports, while the flight of short-term capital from India made the problem all the more acute. Thus, we must be extra careful abour speculative flows of funds which are looking for quick manipulative gains and not for manufacture or solid productive activity. This crucial distinction must not be lost sight of in our desperate anxiety to deal with the balance of payments and repayment problem without affecting what we consider to be our image. Ultimately, our credit-worthiness depends on the basic soundness of our economy and what we are prepared to do to stand on our own legs. How long can adjustment loans and extended credits bail us out of our basic problems and imbalances?

There is no real alternative to setting our own house in order and living within our means. Market forces cannot be a panacea for everything. Concrete steps will have to be taken to step up exports and reduce our dependence on imports. We would not have been so vulnerable if our oil exploration had been planned better and succeeded in greater measure, especially when a third of our export earnings go to finance oil imports. So also with regard to fertiliser and edible oils, the country could have done much more to achieve self-sufficiency. Our food-sufficiency could also get seriously jeopardised before the end of the century if concerted action is not initiated and successfully implemented and the tempo of development maintained at all levels. The recent decision to impart three million tonnes of wheat is not a good augury.

Devaluation or rupee convertibility by itself is not going to take care of the balance of payments problem. As our Finance Minister himself has stated, our export earnings suffered badly mainly because of disruption of trade with the former Soviet Union and also because of recessionary conditions in the world markets. As a result, we have not been able to finance our normal import requirements. Our external indebtedness now stands at a staggering figure of more than 200 thousand crores with a debt service ratio of about 30 per cent. From 1994 we would have to start repaying the medium-term structural adjustment loan taken from the IMF and the World Bank. Over the next two or three years the annual gap in the current account of the balance of payments is likely to be of the order of $ 3 to 4 billion or Rs 9 to 12 thousand crores. In 1991, the balance of current account external payments were prevented from going out of control by import compression. Now the assumption is that liberalised imports will mean greater exports. This assumption will have to be monitored very carefully and continuously and not taken for granted.

So also the assumptions regarding flow of foreign investment into India will have to be examined more carefully both in quantitative and qualitative terms. How much foreign investment is likely to take place and in what areas of our economy and on what terms? A modest figure of $ 1 billion is being mentioned. Apart from the balance of payments, will it strengthen infrastructure, export capability and competitiveness and bring in technologies we want or will it be in areas which must enjoy a lower priority such as consumer and luxury goods which we cannot afford to encourage when so much essential development is yet to take place. We cannot afford to ignore priorities and as the Finance Minister himself has said, "our approach to development has to combine efficiency with austerity" and we must beware of the "mindless and heartless consumerism we have borrowed from the affluent societies of the West". Foreign investment was always welcome if it brought the technology we needed and strengthened exports. But now the trend is to open up the home markets to foreign investment without being selective. This again needs to be carefully watched. It is not only a question of foreign equity but several times more of Indian capital which is scarce and must be used selectively. Direct foreign investment would be welcome to the extent it is forthcoming in fields we need and in a manner which fits into our overall strategy. But it certainly cannot become the cornerstone or mainspring of our strategy or growth. It can at best supplement our own effort.

China, which has achieved much more in the field of infrastructure and the production of essential commodities for the population as a whole, can afford to invite foreign capital with greater impunity and mostly from the Chinese in Hong Kong, Taiwan and such other countries, and satisfy the diversified aspirations of the younger generation who watch life elsewhere on the television. The Chinese development has been so strictly egalitarian, especially in Mao Zedong's 30-year regime upto 1976, that they can now afford to relax some of these standards and make greater use of the market forces and competition without really sacrificing social control of the commanding heights of the economy and the direction of change. Thus, to them, socialism and the market forces can co-exist. They are not mutually exclusive but mutually reinforcing. The recent developments in the Soviet Union have resulted in its break-up, but does not seem to have benefited its economic development. The Chinese approach or response to the international climate of increasing globalisation and liberalisation is more closely related to their own social objectives and aspirations to further strengthen China in all fields.

While no nation can be isolated in the modern world of widespread communications and contact, it is important to pay particular attention to the Human Development Report 1992 of the UNDP which has clearly concluded that "restricted or unequal access to global markets costs developing countries $ 500 billion annually—10 times what they receive in foreign assistance. The richest 20 per cent of the world's population receive 82.7 per cent of the total world income while the poorest 20 per cent receive only 1.4 per cent. Global economic growth rarely filters down". In other words, we have to make the effort ourselves and effectively implement the policies which are relevant to our growth in a fast changing situation.

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AS we have seen, it is the foreign exchange and balance of payments crisis that triggered off some changes which are broadly described as stabilisation policies and structural changes. Stabilisation is mainly concerned with correcting the fiscal deficits and controlling inflation. This is the job of any Finance Minister and need not have arisen out of the IMF conditionalities which appear to have come in handy. The fiscal deficit was reduced from Rs 44,650 crores or eight per cent of the GDP in 1990-91 to Rs 37,792 crores or 6.5 per cent of the GDP in 1991-92 and is to be reduced to Rs 34,408 crores or five per cent of the GDP in 1992-93, which is still one per cent more than what it was in the 1970s. While little can be done about defence and interest charges, only the food and fertiliser subsidies have come in for a lot of comment. The important thing is to ensure that enough food and fertiliser is produced and made available to all, especially the small farmers, at their doorstep and at prices which are within their purchasing power.

The Prime Minister has stated that input costs will be taken into account in determining the price of the grain. He has also said that food subsidy will not be discontinued and the public distribution system strengthened to reach the needy in the remotest parts of the country. Solar energy is also to be subsidised to make it commercially viable. The concept of a subsidy is only an instrument to serve a given purpose. There is nothing inherently good or bad about it. Obviously, if employment and purchasing power is more widespread and more equitably distributed there will be less need to resort to subsidies. Basically, there is a subsidy element in all activities where a product or service is made available at less than the full cost, and there are adminstrative difficulties in targeting them with such precision that those who can afford to pay do not get the unintended benefit of a built-in subsidy. However, better targeting of subsidies is a continuous effort which cannot be given up without harming essential production and life sustaining consumption. But the fiscal problem of avoiding deficits and controlling inflation should be viewed in a broader perspective and in an integrated manner. Scope to reduce or restructure some subsidies is only one small portion of the problem. If inflation is kept within strict bearable limits the basic problem would have been solved. Returning to a regime of low inflation and low interest rates should be the highest on our agenda.

We have seen how growth rate cannot be stepped up by excessive borrowing which is not properly utilised or made to yield a financial return within a specified time frame. Borrowing can also become counter-productive and endanger our economic freedom by leading us into the debt trap. There is also a clear connection between the quantity of money created and inflation at a given level of production. There is, therefore, no escape from the discipline of limiting budgetary deficits and borrowing. As we have moved too close to the debt trap, both with regard to internal and external borrowing, it is time we think of some statutory limitation on borrowing backed by a political national consensus. The Planning Commission should bring out a detailed document to be placed before Parliament analysing the different purpose for which the previous accumulated burden of loans, both internal and external, have been applied and the manner in which they have been used, both at the Central and State levels, for there is a serious mismatch between the terms and conditions of a wide variety of loans and the financial returns they are yielding or are capable of yielding. This is creating a tremendous strain even on Centre-State financial relations. It is high time that this is sorted out, the loans restructured and reduced to the extent necessary or unavoidable, and the pattern of future loans made more meaningful and better related to the purposes for which they are to be used and their capacity to give a return. The interest and period of repayment must be realistic and related to different activities and their potential. The Finance Commission should also take serious note of this problem and suggest proper solutions.

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It can no longer be ignored if future plans are to be funded in an adequate and realistic manner.

◆

INDIAN economy has reached a stage of growth which should really enable us to do much more by way of human resource development, in the field of education, health, social services and fuller employment. This is the best way to step up productivity and the quality of life while simultaneously checking population growth which is crucial. This has to be our own effort and cannot depend directly or indirectly on foreign private capital which, to the extent it comes, will be applied in other areas for adequate profit by international standards. Even in essential infrastructure areas such as petroleum and power, it is to be seen whether substantial foreign investment will be forthcoming and on what terms and at what costs. Even to the extent to which it does come, it is bound to affect our marketing and indigenous pricing policies in a manner which may not be wholly palatable to us or conducive to our equitable growth. Referring to research and investment in non-conventional sources of energy, the Prime Minister is reported to have said: "If you don't do it for the next 10 years, you will have to buy it at least at twenty, thirty, forty, fifty times the cost."

Indisutrial policy has also been liberalised by doing away with industrial licensing except in 18 strategic, import-intensive or environmentally sensitive areas and also approvals for capacity expansion and diversification. Areas reserved for public sector have been reduced from 17 to eight and private participation permitted in core and basic industries. Small enterprises have been allowed to offer 24 per cent of their shareholding to large-scale and other industrial undertakings. Direct foreign investment upto 51 per cent has been permitted in priority industries and a Foreign Investment Board has been set up to deal with foreign investment in other industries. Automatic approval to royalty payments on technology imports has been permitted with certain limits. Disinvestment in public sector is to be done supposedly for greater responsiveness and accountability, but basically to reduce the burden on the budget by raising non-inflationary resources for development. It is greater autonomy that must go with greater accountability and clearer priorities to make the public sector function better. Even previously foreign capital was welcome upto 40 per cent equity with high technology. The concept of the commanding role of the public sector and also of big industrial houses concentrating only in certain areas has been diluted. While privatisation is to be encouraged, not much specific emphasis is placed on the growth of small-scale industries and the decentralised sector.

Just as trade liberalisation will not automatically correct the balance of payments, and may even worsen it if exports do not increase more than imports, so also changes in the industrial policy with a view to make it easier for private and foreign capital may not necessarily result in substantial acceleration of our infrastructure development and thereby make more budgetary resources available for social welfare programmes. The connection seems roundabout and tenuous. On the contrary, speculative inflow and outflow of capital may confuse the issues and create complications without any substantial addition to our manufacturing or productive capacity. The recent securities scam is an instance in point. The motive was clearly to make quick speculative profit without adding anything to the country's production. Deregulation and doing away with bureaucratic controls is, of course, welcome to the extent they are unnecessary or avaoidable. But we cannot make a virtue of our inability to control what needs to be controlled in social and national interest.

Liberalisation cannot mean liberalisation of corruption. As the Chairman of the Joint Parliamentary Committee, Ram Niwas Mirdha, has said: "The *sine qua non* of a policy of liberalisation was a strong regulatory control. Without such regulatory mechanisms, liberalisation could result in a disaster." He admits that foreign banks have become initiators of massive violations of rules and regulations of the host country for sheer profit and our internal regulatory mechanisms have proved grossly inadequate. Foreign banks must conform to the ethos and policies of the country, including lending in the priority sectors. Amnesty schemes are essentially short-term expedients to attract capital, but cannot be a viable alternative to a sound and stable long-term policy of resource mobilisation. At any rate, black money should not be an advantage compared to more legitimate earnings and should be made to flow into specified productive channels even if it is to be dealt with some incentives in combination with a frontal attack against it.

There is nothing wrong in encouraging private enterprise and capital to supplement or add to our national effort in as many fields as feasible, but for this we need not dilute the public sector or support policies and attitudes calculated to weaken or dismantle the public sector which has been the mainstay of our development and has enabled the private sector to grow to the extent it has. One can selectively disinvest or sell shares of public sector undertakings without sacrificing control, if it has to be done in order to reduce the burden on the budget, but to argue that it will have a salutary effect on the culture and accountability of such concerns is rather farfetched.

No doubt there is scope to improve the working of public sector undertakings and that must be done. But the private sector also needs to be improved and thus privatisation is not an automatic panacea for all ills. In such matters it is important to avoid dogma and decide on merits. The public and the private sectors have played a complementary role, the basic idea being that each should do what it is best suited to do. As development proceeds more competition can be had both within the private sector and even within the two sectors. But it would be a serious mistake to underestimate the role the public sector has played and will have to play in the years to come to ensure balanced economic development. The private sector itself depends largely on what the state and public sector does to maintain the tempo of development and demand in the country. In the days of Jawaharlal Nehru three integrated steel plants were built with Soviet, German and British collaboration in the public sector. Will the present climate of liberalisation result in an integrated steel plant in India or export and domestic consumption?

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THE best and the only way to develop our home market is to make a conscious planned effort to step up employment which puts purchasing power in the hands of the many, thereby widening and strengthening the market economy. If large number of people are outside the market economy for most products due to unemployment and poverty, then how can the market and the demand for such products grow. It is a sobering fact that as per a Planning Commission paper on rural employment, manufacturing provides only about 15 per cent of the employment of which more than 80 per cent is in village and small industries including khadi, sericulture, handlooms and powerlooms. Actually, village and small-scale industries employed about 30 million persons as against five million by large-scale industry. The study also stated that apart from 15 per cent in manufacturing, 50 per cent were employed in agriculture and its crop and non-crop sectors, five per cent in construction, five per cent in transport and 25 per cent in other services which needs to be further broken up and better understood.

Broadly speaking about five per cent of the population and 10 per cent of the total workforce are employed in the organised sector. The Planning Commission had estimated that the addition to the labour force is about six million every year, of which only 10 per cent will be absorbed in the organised sector on the basis of five per cent growth rate of the economy. Even if we assume an optimistic growth rate of seven per cent, the extra absorption of people in the organised sector will be very small.

It is also very significant that the village and small industries sector was responsible for 45 per cent of our total exports, its export earning being Rs 5627 crores in 1986-87, while the total Seventh Plan outlay on this sector was only Rs 2753 crores. It is very clear that our priorities need to be substantially corrected in favour of agriculture and the village and small industries sector, if we are serious about stepping up our employment as well as exports. The export earnings of the village and small industries could have been doubled during the 1980s and doubled again during the 1990s. This is not impossible if we make a determined effort and think of the nation as a whole and not just the top 10 per cent of our society, who can take care of themselves in any case. Any rational industrial policy must ensure that the relationship between urban and rural, capital-intensive and labour-intensive, big and small, modern and less modern, should be symbiotic and not parasitic, mutually reinforcing and not rapacious, complementary and not contradictory.

The Planning Commission accepts that 10 million jobs or new work opportunities will have to be created every year during the Eighth Plan with a massive effort at skill formation and technological upgradation. But this remains only an objective without any detailed, indicative, sectorwise blueprints as to how this can be achieved and what would be the precise role of different governmental and non-governmental agencies and organisations. This would be an exciting adventure in nation-building based on a national consensus and cooperation of all. It could be the foundation on which panachayat raj at the village, block and district level could be built and made to grow. Party politics could be kept out at this level if all agree.

Politics at any level will have no meaning if it is to only indulge in mutual acrimony and trumping up of non-issues for purely temporary electoral gains instead of organising the people to overcome basic problems by forging appropriate policies and popular institutions for widespread socio-economic change.

This is the real structural change that should take place in our society to achieve faster self-reliant and progressive growth and avoid stagnation in the midst of pockets of affluence. More resources can be generated by avoiding less essential expenditure and increasing public revenues in relation to the national income by enlarging the base of progressive taxation and better tax administration. But it is our attitudes, priorities and performance that needs to be improved significantly.

The new economic policy is mainly concerned with liberalising trade and big industry. It is not concerned with agriculture and allied activities which hold the key to India's proper and widespread development and progress. India's population is still growing at more than two per cent per annum. It should be brought closer to one per cent as soon as possible and given the highest priority in our national effort. Side by side we should do everything in our power to ensure that agriculture grows at a steady rate of at least three to four per cent per annum, while the national income or GDP grows at five to six per cent and industry at about seven to eight per cent or more. This will mean much greater attention to dry-farming or rainfed agriculture, better utilisation of irrigation, conservation of every drop of water by effective watershed and wasteland development and afforestation, extensive development of allied activities such as animal husbandry, horticulture etc., and revitalisation of extension services and people's participation through panchayat raj and all other institutions which are vital to our success.

The role of the government officials and elected representatives, who are both public servants, should be clearly defined. The official is to implement rules without fear or favour while the non-officials or elected persons have the authority to make the rules and change them but not break them. Decentralised democracy should result in decentralised production and properly implemented social services and not in decentralised corruption. Otherwise, the whole movement will get a bad name and not serve the public purpose. Voluntary organisations and cooperatives can play a vital dynamic role. The cooperatives have been a big success in certain areas as in the cooperative sugar factories. Why should it not succeed on a wider scale and in a more diversified manner?

Jawaharlal Nehru was never tired of stressing the great need to pay maximum attention to the three key institutions at the village level, the school, the cooperative and the panchayat. This has been our biggest failure and no amount of liberalisation in trade and industry is going to make up for it. We must return to the basics and not imagine that there is only the market and we do not have to make any collective institutional effort to build our country from the grassroots level. It should be obvious that development does not trickle down from above but has to be built up from below, if one wants a fair and progressive society where inequalities are kept within certain limits and everybody has a reasonable share in the fruits of development.

The recent economic policy changes are at best limited responses dictated by the need to negotiate a loan to meet the balance of payments and foreign exchange crisis. What we need is an integrated, comprehensive policy and programme for equitable and sustainable growth in the years to come with maximum emphasis on employment and human resource development. ■

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Yajurveda ,(यजु. 38-18)

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This is the ethos of India.
And it runs like a thread in
all our spiritual thought.
The secular outlook is our safeguard.
And it is enshrined in our Constitution.
Let us rededicate ourselves to uphold
this principle.

للیؤمن احدکم حتی یحب
للأخیہ ما یحب لنفسی

(Hadith.)

Treat others exactly
as you would like
to have them treat you.

(Luke 6,31)

ਦੇਹਰਾ ਮਸੀਤ ਸੋਈ, ਪੂਜਾ ਔ ਨਮਾਜ਼ ਓਹੀ,
ਮਾਨੁਸ ਸਭੇਕ, ਪੈ ਅਨੇਕ ਕੋ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵ ਹੈ।
. . . . . .
ਅਲਹ ਅਭੇਖ ਸੋਈ, ਪੁਰਾਨ ਔ ਕੁਰਾਨ ਓਹੀ,
ਏਕ ਹੀ ਸਰੂਪ ਸਭੈ ਏਕ ਹੀ ਬਨਾਵ ਹੈ।

Guru Gobind Singh

SECULARISM
STRENGTH OF OUR REPUBLIC

davp 92/569

Gandhiji's Interview to Indian Students

London, 1931

On the occasion of the fortyfifth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's martyrdom we are publishing below without comment the full text of the report of a fascinating interview given by Gandhiji to Indian students in London in 1931. The report—which came out in Labour Monthly *in April 1932 (reproduced from* Le Monde *where it appeared on February 20, 1932)—is rather hostile. But the interview itself clearly shows the vision of Gandhiji that is even more relevant today after the collapse of a corrupted socialist ideology which he could not embrace despite his acceptance of the essence of socialism. This report in* Labour Monthly *has been unearthed by E.S. Reddy in the course of his research on Gandhiji; and he has passed on the valuable document to us for reproduction in* Mainstream. *Only extracts of this report are available in the* Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi.

—Editor

An Interview With Gandhi

CHARLES PETRASCH

[The interviewer was Charles Petrasch, who was in London while Gandhi was staying there. He was able to have a long interview with the Indian leader and to put to him a number of questions which he had prepared.]

My Indian friends and I had drawn up a list of questions which we wished to put to Gandhi before his departure from London, and we wrote down his replies as the interview went on.

The questions and answers which follow show exactly Gandhi's rôle in Indian politics.

One Can Understand

The first questions put to the Mahatma were on general social matters.

In your opinion, what is the method by which the Indian princes, landowners, industrialists and bankers acquire their wealth?

At present by exploiting the masses.

Can these people enrich themselves without exploiting the Indian workers and peasants?

Up to a certain point, yes.

Have these people any social right to live better than the simple worker or peasant who perform the labour from which they draw their wealth?

Gandhi was silent for a moment. Then he replied: "No right. My social theory is that, although we are all born equal, that is to say, that we have a right to equal opportunities, nevertheless we have not all the same abilities. By the nature of things it is impossible that we should all be of an equal stature, that we should all have the same colour of skin, the same degree of intelligence; and consequently it is natural that some of us should be more fitted than others to acquire material gain. Those who are capable wish to acquire more, and they bend their abilities to this end. If they use their abilities in the best spirit they will be working to the benefit of the people. These people will be 'trustees' and nothing more.

"I should allow a man of intelligence to gain more and I should not hinder him from making use of his abilities. But the surplus of his gains ought to return to the people, just as the earnings of the children who work go to the common family fund. They are only the 'trustees' of their gains, and nothing else. I may be sadly disappointed in this, but that is the ideal which I uphold, and that is what is understood in the declaration of fundamental rights."

Would you demand a higher reward for intellectual work?

In an ideal state no one can demand a higher reward for his intelligence. He who acquires more ought to use it for social ends.

We asked Gandhi if he did not believe that one of the principal causes of the poverty of the Indian peasants and workers lay in the appropriation of the fruit of their labour by the landlords and capitalists, since only a minute portion of the profits of the latter class go to the Government.

Gandhi agreed.

Don't you think that the Indian peasants and workers are right in throwing themselves into a class struggle in order to secure their social and economic freedom and to rid themselves once and for all of the burden of supporting the parasite class?

The Mahatma said no: "I myself am making the revolution for them without violence."

What would be your attitude in face of a revolution of the peasants and workers against the princes, landlords, capitalists and their ally, the British Government? And also, what would be your attitude if such a revolution occurred in an independent India, in an India under a Protectorate, in an India with Dominion status, or in an India in no matter what kind of circumstances?

Gandhi replied quietly: "My attitude would be to convert the better-off classes into trustees of what they already possessed. That is to say, they would keep the money, but they would have to work for the benefit of the people who procured them their wealth. And for doing this they would receive a 'commission'."

A "Non-Violent Revolutionary"

How do you count on organising this trusteeship? By persuasion?

Not solely by verbal persuasion. I have been called the greatest revolutionary of my time. That is perhaps not correct, but I do believe that I am a revolutionary, a non-violent revolutionary. My weapon is 'non-cooperation'. No one can thrive without the collaboration, willing or forced, of the people.

We now put a more precise question:

Would you support a General Strike?

A General Strike is a form of non-cooperation. It is not necessarily violent. I should take the head of such a movement if it were peaceful and justified from all angles. Far from discouraging it I should even encourage it.

We told the Mahatma that we were still not very clear as to his method of operating his system of "trustees", moreover, that we should like to know why the "trustees" would be entitled to a "commission".

"They have the right to a 'commission' because the money is in their possession. No one compels them to be 'trustees'. I invite them to act as 'trustees'. I ask all owners of wealth to act as 'trustees', that is to say, not as wealth-owners by right but as owners mandated by those whom they have exploited. I do not fix a figure for this 'commission', but I ask them only to demand what they consider they are entitled to.

"For example, I shall ask the person who has a hundred rupees to keep fifty rupees and give the other fifty to the workers; but in the case of a person who has ten million rupees I shall ask him to retain, say one per cent. So you see that my 'commission' would not be a fixed figure because that would result in grave injustices."

We grasped Gandhi's meaning but we could not help thinking that this was the delusion of an idealist who still believes in "justice"; we were, besides, somewhat astounded by these ideas, expressed with such conviction, and we waited a few moments before resuming the interview. Then we asked:

The Maharajahs and the landlords have allied themselves with the English, and you wish to make them "trustees". But your best followers are among the masses, who consider the Maharajahs and landlords as enemies. What attitude would you take if the masses, coming to power, decided to put an end to these classes?

The Mahatma replied to us, and his first words, in the opinion of my Indian companions, who belong to the working class, and knew intimately the conditions of life in India, were entirely inaccurate:

"The masses at the present time do not regard the landlords and princes as enemies. But it is necessary to make them aware of the wrong which is being done to them. I do not teach the masses to regard the capitalists as enemies, but I teach them that the latter are doing themselves harm. My followers have never told the people that the English or that General Dyer are bad, but that they are the victims of a system and that it is necessary to destroy the system and not the individual. That is why British officials can live with impunity among the people, although the latter are so inflamed by their desire for liberty."

If you wish to attack the system, there is no difference between a British capitalist and an Indian capitalist. Why, then, do you not apply your system of non-payment of taxes to those which are demanded from you by your own landed proprietors (Zamindars)?

A landed proprietor is only an instrument of the system. It is not at all necessary to undertake a movement against them at the same time as against the English system. It is quite possible to distinguish between the two. We have told the people not to pay the Zamindars because it is with this money that they pay the Government. But we are on good terms with the Zamindars.

We might have joined with Gandhi in pitying the fate of the poor Zamindars, but then it would have been necessary to pity also the poor English, but towards the latter Gandhi's sentiment of justice does not seem to exist. According to his theories, one can only love the capitalists of one's own country. We then asked Gandhi:

Against the Machine

According to Tagore, Bernard Shaw and others, the suppression of the landlords, capitalists and financiers in Russia, and the establishment of the Soviets as the system of government has led in a very short time to a considerable betterment in the social, economic and cultural conditions of the people. Now, it is to be noticed that Russia at the time of the Revolution essentially an agricultural country, presented the same condition from a religious and cultural point of view as does India today. We should be curious to know your opinion on this matter.

Skilfully the Mahatma escaped: "In the first place I do not care about basing my opinions on those of others. That is why I am unable to form an appreciation of the condition of Russia. Moreover, believing—for this is what the Soviet leaders themselves say—that the Soviet system is founded on the employment of force, I have strong doubts of its final success."

What is your concrete programme for giving to the peasants and workers the absolute power of deciding their own destiny?

My programme is a programme which I am having elaborated by the Congress. I am certain that it is resulting in the position of the peasants and workers being infinitely superior to what they have ever been able to have within human memory. I do not allude to their material condition. I mean the extraordinary awakening which has affected them and their capacity for resisting injustice and exploitation.

We knew that Gandhi is an enemy of machines. That is why we put the following question to him:

What do you mean by "machine"? Is not the charkha *(the primitive plough) a machine? Is it that exploitation is not inherent in certain kinds of machines, or do you think it is the manner of using machines which makes them an instrument of exploitation?*

The *charkha* and similar instruments are clearly machines, and from this you can gather my definition of machines. I am willing to admit that it is largely the abuse of the machine system which is responsible for the exploitation of the working class in the world.

You speak of stopping the exploitation of the masses, which implies the abolition of capitalism. Do you intend to suppress capitalism, and if so, are you ready to deprive the capitalist of his surplus wealth so as to prevent him from restarting a new capitalism?

Gandhi smiled sadly, and replied: "If I come to power I shall certainly abolish capitalism, but I shall not abolish capital, and it follows that I shall not abolish the capitalists. I am convinced that the coordination of capital and labour is perfectly possible. I have seen it realised with success in certain cases, and what is true in one case can become true for all. I do not consider capital in itself as an evil, no more than I consider the machine system in itself as an evil."

"Compromise, the Essence of Life..."

We then went on to speak about religious matters and we asked Gandhi if he thought that there existed a Hindu-Moslem problem. His reply was definitely in the affirmative. We then asked him if this problem was of major importance for the masses, and in that case if he thought that it could be remedied by the application of political measures, or by a compromise.

"I do not think this problem exists among the massess, or at least, not to a very great degree. It is not possible to solve it by political measures, but it can be done by a compromise, for compromise is the essence of life, inasmuch as it does not touch the roots of the principles of life."

In a Federal India, with the Princes as autonomous rulers, if the subjects demanded the same elementary political rights as the people of British India and had recourse to civil disobedience, with a popular uprising to enforce their demands, would the federal forces be called to help the Princes in suppressing the uprising? And what would your attitude be in that case?

If I had the power I should never use it, or allow it to be used, for suppressing civil disobedience, no matter how or where it arose, for I hold civil disobedience to be a permanent law of our being, entirely replacing violence, which is the law of the beast.

Is it true that you withdrew your support from those popular movements which arose in the native states, movements with the object of demanding from the Princes the same rights which you demand from the British in British India?

Gandhi looked at us in surprise and gave the lie to this report.

We asked him what, in his opinion, was the difference between "independence" and "equality of collaboration in Empire matters".

"There is, and there is not, a difference between the two. That is to say, two independent states in an Empire can perfectly well be partners, collaborating in an imperial association. But obviously India is not in such a situation. Consequently, an association of India with Britain in the same Empire is a state, or rather a condition, which cannot be likened to independence, for a comparison can only take place between two things of the same kind. In this case the things are not of the same kind. Hence, if there is to be an association.

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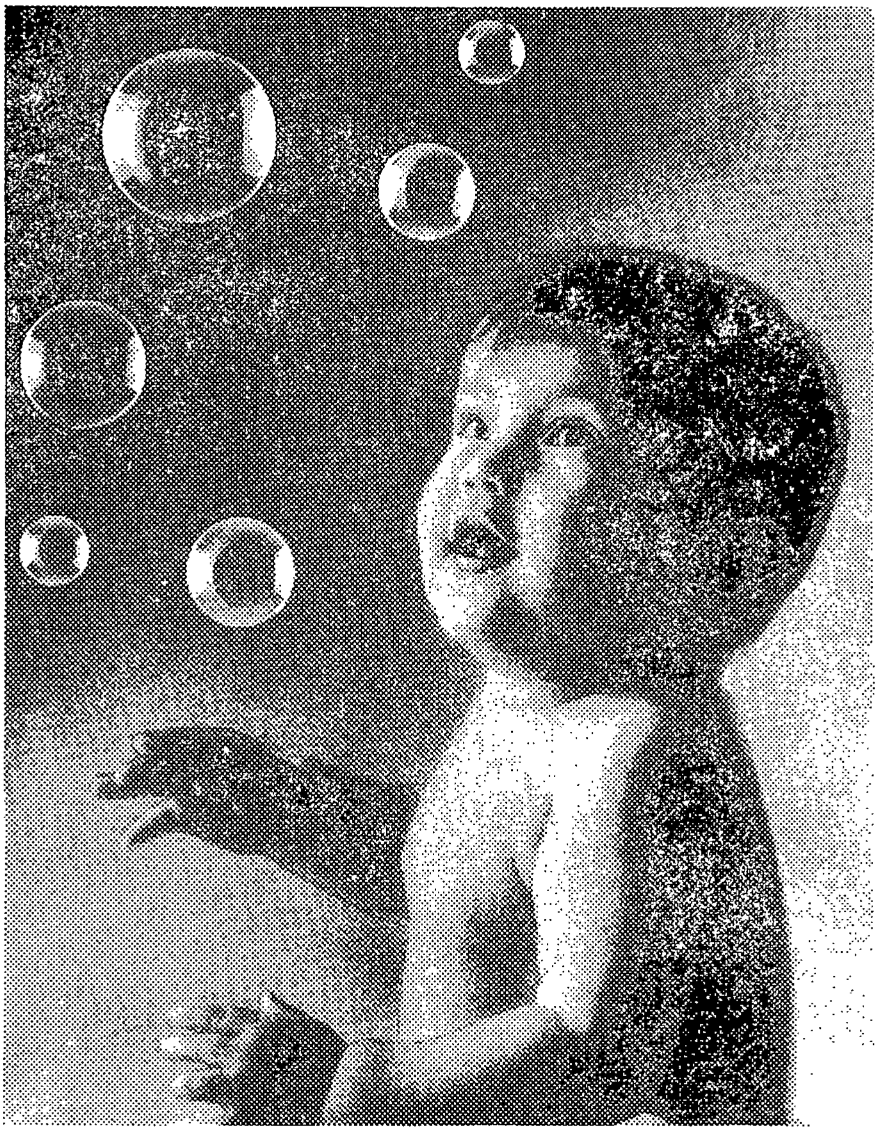

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on an equal footing, between Britain and India, the Empire must cease to exist."

At this, we retorted that the Lahore Congress made no mention of an association of equality within the limits of the Empire.

Gandhi replied that it was no use mentioning this in the Congress, but the question had been touched upon in the speeches.

Does this equality of association envisage the withdrawal of the Viceroy?

The idea of "empire" must disappear entirely. But it is impossible for me to say definitely whether the idea of royalty must also be abolished. I am quite unable to say at present that the king of Great Britain will cease to be the king of India.

Are you taking account of the fact that, since the time of the Lahore Congress, when the declaration of Independence displaced the compromise resolution adopted at Calcutta, the youth of India has believed that it was fighting for an independent India, in which there would no longer be a king? Is it not bad politics to tell the youth of India now that royalty will remain?

Gandhi, quite unruffled, replied that there was no question of bad faith. If the question had been put to him at Karachi, he would have given the same reply.

Well, then, what difference is there between you and Malaviya, who was in opposition at the Lahore Congress?

The difference is this, that Malaviya still wished to give the Empire a chance, whereas I did not.

Do you regard King George and his predecessors as usurpers in India?

I own that Great Britain and King George are usurpers of India.

Why Gandhi Gave Way

We then asked him whether he thought it possible that a country which fought against exploitation could remain part of an Empire based on the exploitation of weaker races.

"It is impossible," the Indian leader told us. "I would lend my heartiest support to the abolition of the British system of government, as well as to the abolition of the capitalist system, but not to the abolition of capital and capitalists. If the British Empire does not stop exploiting the weaker races, we shall refuse to collaborate with it. Imperialist exploitation must disappear; collaboration will have to be free, and India at liberty, if she pleases, to sever the association.

What were the reasons which led you to conclude a truce with Lord Irwin? Was it because, as we have been told, the Congress movement was only fighting on one wing, and if a truce were not arranged, it would be in grave danger of being strangled? And does that mean that you and the Congress were afraid that you would be crushed by the violence of the British Government? Would it not have been preferable, for the principle of "non-violence", that those of you who believed in the principle, should continue the fight and refuse to surrender to the violence of the British Government? Even if the movement thereby suffered a setback, the reverse itself would have been its victory!

Gandhi then attempted to explain his strange attitude in recent months:

"The suggestion of the impending collapse of our movement is entirely false. The movement was showing no signs of slackening. It is possible, and even probable, that in certain cases, it may have wavered, but I did not know of it, since I was in prison. But it would be going absolutely against the rules of 'Satyagraha' (non-cooperation) to come to an agreement at the moment when the Satyagrahis (followers of non-cooperation) were showing any lukewarmness. It is at that moment that they refuse to come to an agreement. I had no fear whatever that the movement was weakening, nor

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was such a thought in my head when I put forward the idea of a truce. The idea of a truce was accepted on its own merits, and it is contrary to the principles of Satyagraha not to come to an agreement when suitable terms are offered.

"Your opinion would have been right had it been through fear of suffering that we accepted the truce; but a Satyagrahi would betray his ideal if he exposed his companions without reason to suffering. You would be perfectly right if we had accepted the truce from base or selfish motives."

Thus, in the matter of the truce Gandhi confessed that a certain weakening was beginning to reveal itself in the nationalist movement, but he said that he was unaware of this because he was in prison. Nevertheless, some months ago, when I was in Vienna, Vithalba Patel, one of the foremost Indian leaders and collaborators of Gandhi, told me that he did not at all understand the latter's attitude: the Mahatma, the soul of the movement for Indian independence and the greatest opponent of Anglo-Indian collaboration, suddenly beginning to preach to the people the cessation of the boycott of British goods and the payment of taxes.

Why did you not see that the Garhwali soldiers, who had refused to fire on an unarmed crowd, were included in the truce? How do you reconcile that with your doctrine of non-violence, since these men were punished for having refused to be party to an act of violence?

A soldier who disobeys an order to fire breaks the oath which he has taken and renders himself guilty of criminal disobedience. I cannot ask officials and soldiers to disobey, for when I am in power I shall in all likelihood make use of those same officials and those same soldiers. If I taught them to disobey I should be afraid that they might do the same when I am in power (sic.) But if they cannot conscientiously carry out the orders which are given to them they can always hand in their resignation.

By these words Gandhi confesses that one day it will perhaps fall to him to give orders against which the conscience of his soldiers will revolt. This last reply not only disillusioned us but also alarmed us.

Those who read this interview will be able to form for themselves an idea of the part which Gandhi plays in the politics of India.

In any case, for us the interview marked the end of a legend. ■

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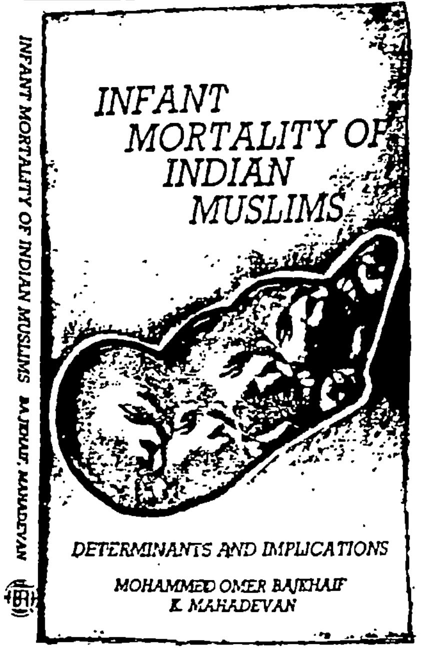
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Challenge to India: The Rightward Drift

ARUN KUMAR

India faces a challenge to its existence as a nation-state. Large segments of the population stand alienated from the very concept of the Indian nation. Faith in a *Hindu Rashtra* (which negates the concept of India) has grown. The demolition of the mosque at Ayodhya has become a symbol of a divide between Hindus and Muslims. Much as some may like to believe, the sequence of events has not ended with the demolition but will continue to unfold like in a Greek tragedy. Indians are simultaneously the actors and the audience, helplessly participating and watching the nation plunge into a situation of civil war.

The fifties and the sixties were periods of dominance of liberal thought in India. Its roots lay in the struggle for national independence. Since the seventies, with the Emergency symbolising a Rightward shift and intolerance, the entire spectrum of opinion in India has gravitated in this direction. This is equally true of the Muslims, Hindus and others. Events in Assam, Punjab, Kashmir and Tamil Nadu have helped accelerate the process and are in turn the result of this movement away from a liberal strand of thought. The question today is not whether a minority has provoked a majority to give up its liberalism and tolerance. The issue is to understand why the majority community is disregarding its own long-term self-interest. To this analysis, the minority community is only incidental.

Historical Context

Most Indians were unaware that there was a controversy about the Babri Masjid and the Ram Mandir. They became aware of it in the eighties. Many Hindus who were aware of the dispute but did not care whether or not the temple came up now want the temple to come up. Some, who knew and wanted the temple to come up somewhere in Ayodhya, now want it to come up where the mosque stood. A few, who had wanted the temple to come up where the mosque was, have demolished the mosque and built a temple there. The entire spectrum of opinion on this question has shifted.

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Such a Rightward shift in the Indian psyche needs to be understood. Its roots need to be explored. This is a prerequisite to any action by those who still believe that some sanity can yet be salvaged from the rubble of the ideals on which the Indian state was to be built. The past can only help fashion a better future but it cannot be changed by present actions. For example, perceived historical wrongs cannot be corrected today. Only repetition of the past mistakes can be avoided.

Without being an expert in history, what is evident to even a lay reader is that the glorious periods of Indian history were characterised by tolerance and liberalism—the Maurya, the Gupta and the Mughal periods. Ashok and Akbar united the country during their rule. Ashok preached tolerance and non-violence. The message spread beyond the borders of India and was influential in vast reaches of Asia. Akbar talked about *Din-e-Ilahi*. The decline of the Mughal empire coincided with the end of liberalism.

Smaller men, lacking in statesmanship, followed. Fighting for their narrow interests, they presented India to the British on a platter. Divide and rule was practiced. The national movement countered this and brought the various communities together to achieve independence. The country is again divided with different segments of society fighting each other. Even the limited gains of the last 45 years are substantially greater than those achieved in the colonial period. These are in jeopardy.

Muslims who came from outside, as conquerors, can be characterised as those who came to loot and others who stayed back to rule. The latter assimilated into the Indian society. Most of the present-day Indian Muslims are indigenous people who converted to Islam because of their social conditions. These are not foreigners in any sense of the word. If citizenship is by place of birth (the concept of motherland) then Muslims are as much Indians and should have the same right to their religion as others. The communal elements are questioning this.

Those who believe that the Hindu religion is tolerant and allows other religions to coexist with itself need to appreciate that even Islam in India was tolerant. Muslim rulers over several centuries did not wipe out Hindus (and Hinduism) in the manner that the Europeans decimated the Red Indians and the Mayan and Inca civilisations in America. Further, Hindus need to contend with their own intolerances and prejudices with regard to caste, community and race. These have come to the fore and make India less tolerant. This retrogression is the background to the events unfolding in India. If Hindus are indeed liberal, why are they now becoming intolerant? If they are proud of what they were, why do they wish to disown it in competition with a so-called 'backward group'?

Economic Context

The Rightward shift in the economic sphere is dramatic. The state in India declared a liberal agenda at the time of independence. It was based on the principle of Equity and Social Justice. However, these goals remained elusive because of the development of vested interests and the ruling elite's lack of foresight. The single-minded pursuit of primitive accumulation of capital by the elite led to the failure of policies one after the other: planning, industrialisation, technological upgradation, literacy, decent health for all, etc.

These failures have brought into question the capacity of the state to deliver. Institutions of democracy degenerated and got discredited. The failure of policy, on the one hand, led to increased pressures on the state and on the other hand, lowered its capacity to deliver. Conflict widened with the ruling economic interests fighting more intensely over a cake that was growing only slowly. Horizons of the ruling elite narrowed and short-term gains became more important than the national interest. It became clear to these economic interests that stable coalitions yield to each partner only a small gain whereas direct capture of state power could give a lot more. Beating and/or cheating the system became common practice.

Manipulation of state power for narrow ends became important. As a result, democratic institutions came under serious assault. The misuse of intelligence, police, bureaucracy, judiciary, academia, etc. followed. The political institutions got devalued. Criminals and economic offenders were drafted in this game and over a period of time have come to wield a major say in political affairs.

The common man with little power was further marginalised and became a helpless observer. Politicians became less responsive to his needs, he could not get justice from the judiciary or protection from the police and the bureaucracy. Intellectuals and professionals failed the citizen by getting coopted into the power structure or presenting their own decadent face by turning corrupt or by simply ignoring their duties.

The Rightward shift in economic policies slowly materialised with the state only paying lip-service to the concept of Equity and Social Justice. Politicians cynically manipulated these concepts for their electoral gains. Mrs Gandhi discredited the concept of *Garibi Hatao* and V.P. Singh the 'Right to Work'. Rajiv Gandhi brought disrepute to the slogan 'Government that Works' (for the poor) and the Janata Party and the National Front made the public wary of the idea of an alternative to the Congress authoritarianism.

As the capacity of the state to deliver came under a cloud, faith grew in private initiative to achieve social good. Wherever the citizen comes into contact with the institutions of state, he/she faces corruption and harrassment—in dealing with politicians, getting justice, with the police, with banks, with municipalities, in educational institutions, in hospitals, etc. The decline of the Soviet Union, failure of planning and the public sector and the pressure of the propertied classes to move towards a market economy promoted the idea that social engineering does not work.

The ruling economic ideology has in 1991 completed the Rightward swing and today even references to Equity and Social Justice are rare. Under the IMF and the Bank-driven reforms, based on the economic interests of the advanced capitalist nations, the lot of the poor has further deteriorated in the last 18 months. All the costs of adjustment are being heaped on the already poor through inflation and growing unemployment. The gains are accruing to Indian and foreign capital through the large number of concessions they are receiving.

It is clear to the citizen that jobs for his children are hard to come by. He is in danger of losing his own employment and faces a rising cost of living. In contrast, the ostentatious consumption of the well-off continues unabated. The government has only discredited itself by talking of sharing the burden by all. When black money continues to flow and the rich have made a killing in the stock market through fraudulent means and state connivance, the credibility of the state is near zero. Yet, the individual feels helpless to act.

The Right ideology has come to dominate. Rule by some abstract force, 'the market', controlled by those possessing money power has become acceptable even to those who lose by it. Similarly, globalisation with the implication that those not a part of this society will dictate policy and decide the fate of this economy is acceptable. Even the Left in India has felt this pressure and adjusted its social and political understanding. Problems emanating from the practical sphere and caused by the vested interests themselves (made worse by the prevailing confusion) are leading to changes in the theoretical positions. Like, on exit policy, public sector, planning and markets. As a result, the Indian Left has been helpless in stopping the Rightward shift in society.

Alienation and Social Institutions

In such a context, with the citizen alienated from social processes, individual solutions are being sought. There is both a contempt for society and a helplessness. This has resulted in growing terrorism, lawlessness and rise in illegality and, therefore, a further breakdown of social processes. The individual is trapped in a vicious circle. The vested (economic) interests are also caught in the same logjam and because of their inability to understand the wider social processes they are increasing the intensity of their own conflicts to obtain more gains out of a cake which is reducing in size. The growing unproductive expenditures and waste were reducing the size of the cake in spite of the high rate of economic growth in the eighties.

The individual who has turned inwards has also become more religious. If this world cannot be improved, at least the next life can be bettered. The individual, confused and alienated, fantasises about the past and becomes susceptible to a distorted history of past glory. His prejudices can be fed and new ones created. The blame for the social ills can be conveniently laid at the doors of some external forces. This in a religious context is bound to be a religious minority.

The Constitution of this country, based on an implicit faith in social engineering, has come under a cloud. No Constitution can ever take care of all contingencies. It can never anticipate all the likely changes that are to take place and specially when change has been as rapid as in the last quarter of the twentieth century. This is specially true in India where conflict has become acute and manipulation of rules the order of the day. Everything has been bent to the convenience of those in power so that they can stay there.

Mrs Gandhi made a mockery of the judiciary (specially after 1975). She played games with the bureaucracy. Favourites were placed in the right positions in the name of social commitment. Cynical manipulations by leaders that followed have provided ammunition to the communalists to discredit the very basis of the Indian nation. Some of the *sants* and others have even questioned the Constitution. They claim it is inappropriate to the requirements of Hindus and, therefore, needs to be changed.

The Shah Bano episode fuelled the communal elements. It is not only given as an example of appeasement but used to discredit the system of justice. It is argued that political interference can be used to have Court judgements changed. The opening of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple in 1985 was also a political act. All this has created the feeling that reference of a dispute to the Supreme Court or its verdict need not be accepted, if inconvenient. The Shah Bano case has highlighted the lack of a common civil code for all Indians. This has enabled a further distinction to be made between the Muslims and others. In brief, the individual stands alienated from the institutions of democracy and exposed to other influences. The communal forces are using the opportunity to fill the breach with their own agenda.

The Communal Virus

Many questions are raised about the minorities. Their commitment to the Indian nation is doubted. In a vitiated communal scenario, this is a charge easy to stick. There are always enough communal-minded people on the other side who would fit a particular description and can be cited as examples. Just as by only quoting the BJP and RSS line it can be argued that all Hindus are communal-minded.

There is always history to contend with. Kashmir, a predominantly Muslim area, never quite integrated with India. On this issue not only have there been wars with Pakistan, a Muslim state, but a segment of the population there has demanded plebiscite and either an independent state or the right to merge with Pakistan. Thus, Muslims in Kashmir can be accused of being disloyal to India.

Similarly, for historical reasons, the partition of India and the communal passions aroused in both the communities at the time have left a feeling amongst the communal-minded Hindus that Muslims have not accepted India as their country and have divided loyalties. These tendencies have only strengthened the Rightward shift and more and more people have come under the sway of such ideas. The existing differences with regard to the civil code, the episodes on and off the cricket and hockey fields, etc. are given as examples in favour of their arguments.

Acts of some have been attributed to the whole community by the communal elements. This has happened in the case of the Sikh community as

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well. The blame for what a few terrorists do falls on the whole Sikh community and they have had to pay a heavy price for this. Sikhism originated within India and Sikhs have had strong ties with the Hindus. The Muslims are in a worse predicament. They can be portrayed as having divided loyalties since they have faith in Mecca and Medina which lie outside the country. Biases and prejudices of the common man have been systematically fed and created. For example, the higher birth rate is presented as a drive for dominance by the minority community and not as a sign of social backwardness. It is not made clear that the populations of the two groups will not even equal that of each other for the next 600 years. Fear is irrationally aroused. The possibility of four wives is not portrayed as a sign of social backwardness which needs to be eradicated but as a grudge against Muslims.

This is a cumulative process which gathers momentum. Communalism of one kind feeds the other. Minorities whose patriotism has been questioned have invariably reacted with defiance. The hurt is translated into a divide. During and after the 1982 Asiad, the singling out of the Sikhs created a hurt and a divide with the rest of India. With Indian Muslims, the process has gone on for the last 45 years.

Pseudo-secularism

Those arguing for secularism in the country have been branded pseudo-secular and as appeasers of minority communalism. This is true since the secular forces concentrated their attention on Hindu communalism. Further, they were weakened by the cynical manipulations of the concept of secularism by the Centrist parties. Just as they exploited the caste card and the issue of Equity and discredited the modernity programme, they used the communal card and discredited secularism.

The task of the secular forces in narrowing the communal divide is difficult. This is more so because most of the secular forces have identified with modernisation in society and have propagated a non-religious agenda based on material well-being. With failures on the economic front, the non-elite have got alienated from the secular forces who could neither communicate at the spiritual plane nor deliver the material goods. The secular elements antagonistic to vested interests could not exert influence on them to desist from playing with institutions of democracy and using the communal card. These are the causes of the helplessness of the genuinely secular forces. The alienated masses are open to the influence of the communal amongst the vested interests who are thriving on others' failures.

Communal elements do not believe in reform through voluntary change. They try to impose their will. It is demanded that the mosque be given up by the Muslims as a gesture of goodwill to the Hindus but it is not thought fit to withdraw the claim to an existing structure. It is not appreciated that whereas a minority can only demand from a majority, only a majority can try to impose its will on the minority.

Secular forces have believed that liberalism of a minority, not a part of the ruling elite, cannot be a substitute for tolerance in a majority community. In a liberal society, minority communalism can be tackled through social reform. But a pre-requisite for all this to happen is the existence of a majority community which is liberal and tolerant. This may even be the result of acts of a small ruling elite in the majority community. But, as is evident now, this situation leads to unstable conditions in the country.

The failure of the secular forces in this task has put them on the defensive. Yet, if the country is to survive and prosper, there is no alternative but to challenge the communal agenda by reversing the Rightward drift of the Indian society. The Centrist parties are discredited on these tricky issues. People with credibility will have to come forward to pose the challenge to the communal forces.

Unity of Secular Forces

To reverse the Rightward drift in Indian society, there is a need to change the direction of politics of the land. Unfortunately, the existing Centrist parties lack credibility and the Left is strong only in parts of the country. The latter is also confused because of the demise of the communist system and, therefore, on the defensive. Its weaknesses have prevented it from making a sufficient impact on the politics in the country. The socialist groups have preferred to clear their own mutual suspicions rather than unite to create a new politics.

All these segments of Indian politics need to overcome their mutual suspicions to come together to fight the Rightward drift in the country. Broader programmatic differences can be sorted out later. These groups will have to mobilise non-party formations, like the NGOs and other concerned citizens. Different approaches adopted by various groups should be welcomed and not seen as a threat to each other's support bases.

Tokenism would not do. Holding demonstrations and signature campaigns are important but inadequate to the task at hand. These instruments have not only been often used but are actions at a distance. They do not mould public opinion and only serve to convince the committed or keep their morale up. The need today is to make direct contact with the people, understand their concerns and the reasons for their Rightward shift.

Interaction requires an idiom which the masses understand. Those who are disillusioned with the modernity programmes will not easily return to it. Unfortunately, in the past also many got activated only at the time of a crisis. But they quickly got exhausted as thing settled down (not that they are solved) and complacency set in. In the absence of a clear direction, no long-term change resulted.

The challenge of the communal forces needs to be fought politically. The present ruling political structure which does not enjoy enough grassroot support and has increasingly got isolated since it is being perceived as a party of vested interests, is trying to solve the problem through legal niceties. The communal forces have made it clear that they will heed the Supreme Court (SC) only if it suits them. They argue that a matter of faith cannot be settled by the SC. The ruling groups do not know how to counter this because they have lost touch with the people. Ordinances will not help. Today, the ruling party is constantly having to adjust to the agenda set by the communal forces.

Alternate Agenda

The secular forces are currently not in a position in most of North India to provoke an open confrontation. They are not confident of going to the polls on the issue. The communal forces have rapidly gained ground in the last two elections. This will change only if the politics of the land undergoes a basic change.

It needs to be appreciated that changes in society are not easily reversible. Solving social problems later is more difficult. Problems may originate from the economic sphere but cannot later be tackled by economic measures alone. In Punjab this is evident. Social and political changes alter people's attitudes. These then come in the way of purely economic solutions.

The intelligentsia will have to rethink how to reconstruct the national agenda and shift the society back to a more tolerant and liberal path. A dialogue will have to be re-established with the common man in this country. The Western orientation of the elite will have to change (this will not be easy with globalisation as the new God) and they will have to understand and face their own biases. In the name of modernisation, globalisation and technological advancement (reform), the propertied classes in conjunction with the middle classes are pushing forth their narrow self-interest to the detriment of the masses. This is dividing society further and alienating the individual.

Even this 'reform' is stalled and the elite are caught in a cleft stick with neither a way ahead nor a path of retreat. This is the crisis both for the ruling groups and others. The former have lost direction and the latter are suffering under the burden of the ill-conceived reforms. The present reforms are stalled because exit policy, the financial sector reforms, full convertibility on trade account and liberalisation of imports are difficult to implement. If pursued, they will further antagonise a secular force, the trade unions. A spurt in prices will increase discontent. The already difficult foreign exchange situation will become precarious.

If the Righward shift continues, the social and political environment is unlikely to improve and foreign funds unlikely to flow in. The current situation has affected exports and imports adversely thus making the foreign exchange situation even worse. The recession in industry has deepened with the loss of production and disruption in trade and transportation. The artificially buoyed stock exchange cannot be kept afloat much longer with the aid of the financial institutions.

The Rightward trend in Indian society has brought in its wake a crisis point in social, political and economic terms. It threatens the social gains of women, the *dalits* and other backward sections of society. It would accentuate disparities allround. The media would be muzzled, dissent suppressed and academia reined in. Centralisation would reach a new high. All this has and will further fragment the country. Communalism in isolation is infeasible. Its roots lie in the Rightward drift and that needs to be tackled.

A retreat from this road to disaster can only occur through the creation of a new politics by addressing the real issues before the people—Equity, Social Justice, unemployment, inflation, restoring the functioning of the rule of law and of the democratic institutions, genuine decentralisation of economic and political power, etc. The alienation of the individual would have to be rectified; this is the reform needed.

The ruling groups in India have reached a dead end in terms of their politics. If they proceed along the path they have chosen in the seventies and the eighties, they will not have much left to rule, as in Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union. If they believe in India, they will have to submerge their narrow interests in the cauldron of nation-building. A reversal of course (both economic and social) is called for, either way. ■

Remembering Achyut Patwardhan

M.V. DESAI

Co-author of *The Communal Triangle in India* with Ashok Mehta and the youngest member of the Congress Working Committee, Achyut Patwardhan was in 1930s a national leader among politicians with considerable achievement and much greater promise. He was born with a silver spoon in the mouth, maybe a little smaller than Jawaharlal Nehru's. But, alongwith Yusuf Meherally and Aruna Asaf Ali, he was one of the most effective young speakers. Together, as also singly, the three were rivals of Nehru's fame as the youth's political darling. My friends who did not wear *khadi* were tempted to wear it after seeing how very attractive the livery of freedom looked when it draped the bodies of Achyut Patwardhan, Aruna Asaf Ali and Yusuf Meherally.

To those used to today's mobility and instant communication, it must sound odd that it took me as late as a midnight in August 1942 to have my first glimpse of Achyut Patwardhan. For some twenty years, our families were no strangers to each other. Achyutji's elder brother, Raosaheb, was a student and teacher in Annie Besant and Madanmohan Malaviya's Central Hindu College, where my father had taught English in the 1920s. Achyutji was to follow them to Banaras and to strike a friendship there also with J. Krishnamurti. Achyutji's political stamping ground was Poona, then my home for two years of college at Fergusson. Perhaps my studies and his politics never overlapped.

Happily, however, our paths did cross in August 1942. One night, a friend took me to a bungalow opposite the playgrounds of Poona Young Cricketers' Gymkhana. There, without notice, I found myself face to face with Achyut Patwardhan. He talked of the anti-British history being made those days in Satara, Ahmedabad and in some liberated districts of UP and Bihar. He thought no person could live better than by giving life for the country's freedom. Those present became confirmed participants in the 'Quit India' movement.

In a few days' time, I found myself detained without trial in Yeravada Central Prison, Poona. I have never been able to recall the names or faces of that midnight's other young companions. Most of them were students. The only person who has remained etched in fifty years of memory is the inspiring young Achyut Patwardhan.

The author, a veteran journalist, is a former Editor of The Times of India.

During the following half century—he died last year after he had delivered in Banaras a lecture on Acharya Narendra Deva—we probably spent, all told, some 50 days together. But knowing him has enriched these 50 years. Although I have rarely referred to my meeting with him in August 1942, it automatically won me many friends, especially among Socialists from all over India. Ganga Saran Sinha, Jayanti Dalal, Haji Jhaver Gilani and S.M. Joshi I must mention among them, since they are no more. The same bond of family ties and friendship was built up with his younger brother Padmakar Patwardhan later also in jail with us in 1942.

In the 1950s, in Delhi and Poona, I indeed saw more of Padmakar and Sunanda Patwardhan and of Raosaheb and Manikbai. These links owed their more recent inspiration to Achyutji. And they kept growing stronger though he himself was not much in sight. His was an influence but not a presence. His proximity was not needed because his name was good enough to bring Raosaheb and me together as friends also interested in the Indian press or to get my brother Sudarshan to help Raosaheb Patwardhan when he edited Sane Guruji's weekly *Sadhana*.

In his later non-political years, Achyut Patwardhan was less concerned about how badly our institutions worked and more about the character and behaviour of individuals. Perhaps he thought institutions rarely served the purposes they were set up for. Yet he remained an amazingly well-informed spectator of the changing economic and political scene. And when he thought his conscience would prick him if he did not play his part, he did not spare himself. Occasionally he went up and made bold to speak his mind to persons like Mrs Indira Gandhi and R. Venkataraman.

He was moved by public interest and wanted institutions like the offices of the Congress President and Prime Minister or of the President to function within a framework of accepted norms and set the tone for new codes of conduct. His disinterested views were heard with respect. If his advice had been acted upon by Jaya Prakash Narayan, Indira Gandhi and R. Venkataraman, the nation might have moved in a different direction at some turning points in its post-independence history. But the shorelands of history will remain littered with the wreckages of such might-have-beens.

He agreed with me that his life had been an open book; his anti-Stalin socialism, friendship with Sardar Patel and differences with Lohia, his long engagement with J. Krishnamurti's ideas and his leadership of the 1942-43 underground were aspects of public-spiritedness as well as an inward search relevant to any comprehensive story of events before and after 1947. To fill in the facts, he had agreed to let me spend some 50 more days with him in Madras, where he later lived in the quiet seclusion of the Theosophical Society. Together we were to go over some of the major events in his life. But he died too early for this to be recorded with his consent.

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AT Adyar in Madras, it was possible to see Achyutji more frequently and at greater leisure. But he did not find time in Bombay to take me to the Anjuman-i-Islam School to see and listen to J. Krishnamurti. He sat at the back with hundreds of of commoners like me; he avoided the front seats where he would have been recognised and given a seat of honour. Again in Madras in the 1980s, he got me to renew acquaintance with Ram Nath Goenka who had helped him, Aruna Asaf Ali and others to remain underground during the 'Quit India' movement.

This was in rather unexpected circumstances. RNG had set up a foundation in memory of his son and they wanted to honour the most outstanding journalists with an award of one lakh rupees each year. Achyut Patwardhan told RNG that he would want me to be on the panel of juries, if not a trustee. In turn and on my own, I told RNG (whom I had not met since 1958) that I would certainly be glad to help so long as Achyutji needed it.

Achyutji felt he should help RNG set the highest standards in evaluating an editor's contribution to the Indian press. So the jury was on its own. The very first award was a challenge and became a pointer. Interested newspapers had indeed come out with news stories about differences among members of the jury (who then had not yet met even for first time)! There were "well-placed sources" narrating their versions of conflicts between the jury and RNG.

Newspapers rode their hobby horses and put forward names of possible award winners as sure to succeed as horses on the race course. But such was the reputation of Achyut Patwardhan that no bias or pressure would work and professionals in no way fond of RNG's ways of running his newspaper empire appreciated the integrity of the awards. The first award went to V.K. Narasimham whom RNG had pushed out of the *Indian Express*. Rajmohan Gandhi attended a jury's meeting fixed long ago, although it actually took place away from Madras where his mother had died a day earlier. And Achyut Patwardhan saved the day when one jury's reservations about the credibility and character of a candidate were respected by him after all other members of the jury had expressed themselves in favour of this nationally acclaimed journalist.

To turn down a candidate whose contributions to Indian journalism were prized by all others but questioned by only one and this too not because of professional failings but a trait in character which prevents professionals and administrators from withstanding undue influence and buckling under pressures would not have been possible in the absence of Achyut Patwardhan. In retrospect, probably RNG himself was on the side of this editor. But he was rejected.

On another occasion, the award went to an *Indian Express* journalist (who by virtue of being an *Express* employee was *ipso facto* debarred for being considered as a possible candidate). But this was after he had resigned his job from the *Express* group of newspapers. It appeared RNG thought he was past his prime. This happened, I believe, with Achyut Patwardhan's consent—which may have been given when he was nodding like Homer.

What stands out in memory, however, are not such encounters of half-a-century but Achyut Patwardhan's warmth in building up human relations. This enabled him to win friends equally easily among the old and the young. He will remain an influence because of his view of life and the way he put this view to practical use in his friendships. It was a privilege to listen to him setting out Indian thinking on the origin of matter, on an essential unity of all that is sentient and lifeless, on the emergence among human beings of likes and dislikes, of possessiveness and renunciation, of rejection and alienation and on issues that ought to be treated as eternal or dismissed as passing shows. On the whole, his friendship will remain an abiding influence, getting stronger in his physical absence.■

BOOK REVIEW

Nehruvian Heritage

URVASHI DHAMIJA

The Legacy of Nehru—A Centennial Assessment, edited by D.R. Sardesai and Anand Mohan; Promilla & Co.; 1992.

"Nehru who?" Students of a premier college in the United States are reported to have asked this question when they were urged to attend a seminar on Nehru on their own campus in 1989. In our country, of course, there is no question of such ignorance, Nehru is simply too well known not only in terms of his various identities such as Gandhiji's colleague in the freedom struggle and as India's first Prime Minister but also in terms of his distinct ideas such as "non-alignment" and "self-reliance".

But familiarity is one thing and understanding is another. To this day there is no broad agreement about the continuities and changes in his priorities and their implications in a rapidly changing world during a political career which spanned more than four decades. This is in spite of the fact that especially since 1985, the year of the birth centenary of the Congress party, there has been a conscious effort, particularly in non-official forums, to discern these priorities and analyse their far-reaching consequences. It is against this background that a volume of essays in which distinguished scholars from various disciplines in 1989 expressed their views on either little known aspects of Nehru's thought, or on the enduring issues during his lifetime, represents a valuable effort.

The editors—D.R. Sardesai, Professor of History and Chairman, South and South-East Asian Studies, UCLA, and Anand Mohan, Professor of Political Science at Queen's College, City University of New York—planned and directed the two conferences in the United States where the essays were first presented as papers. Most of the participants, like the political scientist and historians from Delhi and Bombay, were Indians, but closely associated with universities in Britain, Canada and the US. The book has been divided into three sections. Under the first, which has been somewhat inadequately entitled "Nehru's Personality", the focus is as much on Nehru's writing skills as on his macro-political perspective. In the second, the impact of Nehru's ideas and interventions in various areas of domestic politics such as the economy, religious practice and Centre-State relations are considered. In the final section, Nehru's abiding interest in foreign affairs is probed with reference to such concepts as "non-alignment" and India's relations with the countries of South and South-East Asia.

John B. Alphonso-Karkala, in his essay entitled "Nehru's Aesthetic Sensibilities", says that Nehru with his inherited sensitivity to Indian culture and acquired European mental sophistication represented the phenomenon of the modern cosmopolitan writer. He could disassociate his emotion from an issue and project a unique and extraordinary viewpoint which had transnational appeal. From among one of the letters that he wrote to his daughter from prison in the twenties and the thirties, "as he telescoped events from misty past and harsher present, Jawaharlal appears more like a renaissance man, an all-rounder not particularly fossilised into any single discipline or profession, but fully aware of life's infinite possibilities; as a scientific humanist able to transcribe his refined sensitivities, without Swiftian biting satire, in good natured humour". It is interesting that various persons in India who have reviewed the recently published volume of Nehru's writings which consists of letters he wrote to Indira from prison in the forties should share Alphonso-Karkala's assessment of Nehru as a writer.

In his essay, "Nehru's Valuation of the Political', Anand Mohan adds another dimension to S. Gopal's observation in the Introduction that "from the late twenties Nehru had fashioned for himself and the national movement an ideology which was half-liberal and half-Marxist". Anand Mohan says that Nehru's distinct perspective on politics, understood in its broadest sense, was that of an Indian nationalist. He had an acute sense of history similar to Machiavelli inasmuch as they both came to conclusions relevant for their own times by relying upon "common sense or shrewd political foresight". Nehru's views on the state have a Hegelian ring, Anand Mohan says, though unlike Hegel he did not

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believe that national spirit could find expression in individuals without their conscious will and intention. Nehru is again closer to Hegel than to Marx in urging that "it is social and national forces which are the medium from which (a person) derives the elements of his individuality, and it is not the economic that exhausts the social but it is the social which subsumes the economic".

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MICHAEL BRECHER whose biography of Nehru, published in 1959, is required reading for potential Nehru scholars, notes that "Nehru's legacy to India 25 years after his death, seems more enduring than that of Mao, the only other leader in Asia and Africa whose record as nation-builder bears comparison with Nehru". In the domestic sphere Brecher identifies this legacy with political stability and democracy, planning, secularism, social change together with the growth of inefficiency, corruption and neglect of land reform. A worrisome question for Nehru's countrymen at present is whether the problems of poverty and ethnic tension and political high-handedness which exist today on a scale far vaster than in Nehru's time, are inherent in Nehru's distinct approach which lay in simultaneously pursuing desirable goals involving contradictory compulsions in the context of changing circumstances, or whether it is because Nehru's successors were not able to combine imaginative policy-making with appropriate administrative action and political direction. Michael Brecher says former is the case: "Nehru's failure to achieve the goal of transformation in agrarian relations was foredoomed by his higher commitment to non-violent democratic means to achieve social and economic change." K.S.R. Murthy, who has evaluated India's economic development during the Nehru period, stresses the second: "Planning efforts under Nehru did not produce the expected results in the most important area of improving the living conditions of the poor. While this was a major failure to a commitment made long before independence, the reason for that could be attributed to Nehru and the government during his period only to the lesser degree. The bulk of responsibility for this failure, even to this day, should rest with successive governments (and leaders) that followed him for not focussing their energies on the unfinished business of the Nehru era."

Bhagwan Dua who investigated relations between the Centre and the States in the fifites and the early sixties, however, has come to the conclusion that many difficulties encountered today in adapting the federal principle can be traced to unhealthy precedents in the years after independence. "Nehruvian political system was 'near hegemonic'," he says. "Nehru institutionalised a federal framework of consensus that was not congenial to the development of State Governments as autonomous centres of power in the political system." Asghar Ali Engineer in "Nehru, Secularism and Nation-Building" has also brought out the ambivalence of the Nehruvian legacy, despite Nehru's best intentions. Nehru promoted a notion of secularism which was "undoubtedly Western" but which Nehru believed could be adapted to the country's advantage despite the complexity of its conditions. "He did not submit to obscurantists ideologically though he often compromised pragmatically." He was indeed "soft" towards the Muslims because in the aftermath of partition he sensed that besides being amongst the poor and backward they were also leaderless and demoralised. The Muslims, as we know, responded by joining secular national parties rather than their own communal groupings. This represented a big boost to the Nehruvian concept of secularism which was also the one embodied in the Indian Constitution. But a price had to be paid. It accentuated the feelings of alienation among a large section of the Hindus, revived memories of *Hindutva* which Savarkar a few decades earlier had struggled hard to upgrade as a credible political theory.

In his essay, "Nehru and Non-Alignment, a Reappraisal", B.R. Nanda refutes the criticism that Nehru's policy was motivated by mere economic gain or the need to project India as a world power. The Marshall Plan in 1946 came after a formal declaration indicating the Government of India's foreign policy had been made. In 1947 when the British Labour leader suggested that Nehru try and bring the US and the USSR together by taking advantage of the universal feeling aroused by Gandhiji's death, Nehru's reaction was: "It amazes me how some intelligent people are led by frustration to make fantastic suggestions..." Nehru's foreign policy, Nanda says, was rooted in a coherent world-view which was centered around India but India was not regarded as am isolated entity. "Peace is said to be indivisible, so is freedom, so is prosperity, and so is disaster." Yet the fact was that each nation in a decentralised world was on its own.

Sardesai has shown how while Nehru was forthright in condemning colonialism against the

Dutch in Indonesia he was circumspect in relation to Indo-China since France was still non-commital about the five portions of Indian territory it had under its control. But it was perhaps because no other Third World leader had such a well-considered ideology that none could match him in seizing opportunities for promoting international peace. In 1954 he sensed the war-wearines of the combatants in Indo-China and pressed for peace even as the US Foreign Affairs Department was set to assist the French military authorities for another round of fighting. In relation to Pakistan, while Surjit Mansingh says that Nehru's policy was vitiated by factors outside his control, Giri Deshingkar feels that this was not so in the case with China. With reference to the influence of the IB on Nehru he says, "it is difficult to say whether the tail was wagging the dog or whether Nehru had a split level approach towards China."

Sardesai and Anand Mohan's book, despite the mass of interesting and insightful data on Nehru's policies, leaves one dissatisfied in one respect. Most scholars who wrote for them were academics in the US and Britain. Since the seventies some universities in these countries have generated a vast amount of material on the post-colonial state, the modernisation process in these states and the revival of new-colonial patterns. Yet no contributing author has analysed Nehru's thought against this background. Tapan Raychaudhuri's essay, tantalisingly entitled, "Nehru and Western Dominance" in fact ignores the literature associated with the Dependency paradigm. This lapse, however, needs to be seen in perspective. Due to the detailed footnotes at the end of each essay and the selective bibliography on Nehru at the end, the book can serve as a handy reference for not only a study of Nehru but also for anyone analysing post-independence Indian politics.■

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Republic Day Reflections

M.V. RAO

There have been many anniversaries of freedom and of the declaration of the republic that followed. We are 46 years old/young as a free and united people—even if the unity is tattered at the fringes. As a republican nation-state we are, at 43, younger. This is time enough, one would think, for hope to flower or curdle. As we move to the golden jubilee of freedom four years from now, the signs are that hope is curdling, faster each day in recent times. Some three years later we will be called upon to observe the golden jubilee of the republic which by then could lose, at the present rate, much of its shine unless we are on guard.

Several of the early anniversaries were euphoric as the people rejoiced in feeling free and in the rediscovery that we are, after all, one people subcontinentally, from "Kashmir to Kanyakumari". Rejoicing yielded to problems of self-government as the republican Constitution was proclaimed, and euphoria to kindlings of doubt whether the charter of change the Constitution represented and its promise of "justice, liberty and equality" covered all citizens irrespective of "religion, race, caste, sex (or) place of birth".

Each succeeding anniversary saw the doubts gather mass and turn into despair and protest as large numbers of people were left out in the cold by a coalition of powerful political, industrial and agricultural interests that made the management of protest, and not equitable change, its main business. If as a result the political process gets further alienated from the people and the mass of protest gathers momentum and direction, there may be reasons to fear that the original design of the republic, its charter of change strengthened by some mid-course corrections, may be knocked out of shape and recognition by the jubilee year of 2000. Will this happen? A great deal will depend on the ruling party and its efforts to regain democratic legitimacy as an instrument of equitable change.

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HOW legitimate and representative was the coalition of interests in the Congress as it took shape on the eve of independence, and how successful has it been in striking democratic roots since then?

When the people realised in the twenties and thirties that the British would be leaving soon, there was no sense of impending historic change especially in the countryside. Until, that is, Gandhiji changed the lawyerly struggle into a mass movement and brought within its fold the peasants and workers and especially the poor peasant (as the industrial proletariat was still a category that belonged to exciting undergound literature). Thus the poorest Indian transcending caste, community and religion identified the struggle with his condition for a while. But this identification and involvement hardly lasted long after the first anniversary of freedom.

Long before this happened, Gandhiji had broken with the Congress on the ground that there was "a growing and vital difference of outlook between many Congressmen" and him. He made three points which are of relevance even today: 1) general disregard of the "educated few" (in the Congress) to the plight of the "partially unemployed and semi-starved millions who have become almost like beasts of burden"; 2) "sharp differences of view" on the formation of a parliamentary party, separate from the mass organisation; and 3) "growing corruption in our ranks".

Gandhiji was to return to these themes some months after freedom and days before he was gunned down. Preoccupied with the problem of the reconstitution of the Indian polity, he suggested the AICC disband the Congress as a "propaganda vehicle and parliamentary machine" and function as a mass organisation based on village panchayats, leaving the parliamentary field to others including perhaps the Congress in another form. But Gandhiji was by then becoming irrelevant to the political process.

As against the primacy of the party he advocated, Jawaharlal Nehru and other leaders are said to have argued for the establishment of a "strong central authority in as large a part of India as possible", a task which they thought only governmental agencies could perform. They are

The author, a veteran journalist, is the former Editor of Link *and was in charge of* Inter-Press Service *in India.*

said to have conceded that the Congress "was in a bad shape" but that it could not be improved "except by altering the general atmosphere in the country" which, once again, they thought only official agencies could handle.

Most problems that the Congress, its governments and the country face today may be traced to some of those awkward decisions taken by leaders of the government against strong advice from Gandhiji. In denying Gandhiji, the Congress denied itself the opportunity to widen its social base, and emerge as an inclusive coalition of all sections, including the peasants and artisans of rural India.

Along the way, it got into further problems. To win elections it allowed a new class of vested interests to join its ranks like the semi-official class of village sarpanchs, and conservative and communal forces. In response to electoral reverses in the late sixties and seventies, and in the wake of repeated leader-oriented splits in the organisation, the Congress made several policy twists and turns that left it open to manipulation by a coalition of powerful industrial and agricultural interests. And, by implication, it has become a major proponent of the status quo, exercising a powerful veto against structural changes like in land relations and of the empowerment of the vast multitude of disenfranchised Indians.

This is the bind in which the Narasimha Rao Government has found itself in, a circle which it has not been able to break granting that it has had more room to manoeuvre than earlier party governments in view of the collapse of old leadership structures and party-government hierarchies. Even this has not helped, looking at party developments from Tirupati to the what-has-been-called the major reconstitution of the Central Government. It has not helped to break the factional logjam within the party that still casts its heavy shadow over the government.

No crime, no punishment is recognised in the choice of new Ministers, in the promotions and in the status quo maintained in important Ministries. Some jokers in the pack have been dropped and some moved around. There is no relief, no release vouchsafed of pent up resentment over the shenanigans of veteran Ministers. But the deepening of a subterranean North-South divide is again whispered about.

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DOES all this make the Congress better able to meet any of the challenges it faces as the party of the government at the Centre? It does not, from the open information available openly. There are myriad rumours and they do not really matter, or should not.

The reconstituted government, and the reconstituted leadership line of the party is clearly in no position to secure a moratorium on divisive questions. Its attempts to build political coalitions straddling party divisions on critical issues, collapsed at Ayodhya. And the party unlikely to agree to become a partner in a coalition against communalism that other parties are building. Is this a manoeuvre intended to make room for itself for a new kind of "deal" with assorted sadhus and sants? It is a very unlikely option the Prime Minister will choose, though the gossip mills keep churning out these and other such rumours.

It is unlikely that the BJP will be able to gain a great deal in terms of public support or in terms of votes if and when an election is held, notwithstanding the polls.

But it has certainly succeeded in shaking the faith of the secular majority in the country in the commitments of the political class as such in secular democratic values.

Laloo Prasad Yadav is a much abused man. But he has been the only man and Bihar the only State that has made it possible for the Left and other Janata Dal allies to hold an impressive rally against the communal forces. Yet all of them have been responsible at one time or another in the past in helping the BJP gain respectability as a partner in the power coalitions they have built.

There is no way the communal forces can be truly fought unless all those who wish to do it drop their fear of change, and discard their status quoist politics whatever their public policy platforms.

The two Communist Parties must, in this sense, drop their overt and covert opposition to the emergence of former shadowy forces like the Indian People's Front and the Naxalites into mainstream politics.

The Janata Dal leader, V.P. Singh, has made the strongest case yet for the enfranchisement of the neglected sections of the society in order to strengthen secular democracy. But this cannot be done through slogans; it can be done only through sustained political work among the backward and marginalised people over long years. ■

After the Demolition at Ayodhya

RUCHIRA GUPTA

The demolition of the Babri Masjid and the political ghettoisation and sectarian violence it has unleashed have posed a grave threat to the Indian Republic and the Constitution which upholds it. The scale of the carnage, the demoralisation and the acute sense of insecurity are not as tragic as the fact that to a legitimate political party which might come to power because of the rot in the ruling Congress-I, the basic tenets of liberal democracy—the rights of person and property, freedom of conscience and, most importantly, the rule of law—no longer count for very much.

Ever since the Vishwa Hindu Parishad had launched a campaign in 1986 to reclaim for the 'Hindus' what it believed was the *Janmabhoomi*, there have been real fears about how far it would go in pursuit of its goals. The VHP soon made it clear that it would not accept third party mediation unless it were assured a favourable outcome. And the VHP leaders disclosed that they didn't believe that the dispute was capable of being resolved through courts. But as long as the organisation was viewed as no more than the extremist fringe of the *Sangh Parivar*, one could continue to believe that mainstream Hindu opinion would shun such belligerence for a more consensual approach.

Hence the alarm when the VHP's rabble-rousing rhetoric began to be echoed by the Bharatiya Janata Party; and the rhetoric enabled it to emerge as the largest Opposition party in Parliament. In a very real sense that marked the turning point. And the party's endorsement of the VHP's stand lent a sort of 'legitimacy' to what was a patently reckless course of action. The consequences have been disastrous.

The demolition of the Babri structure in Ayodhya is not the first crisis that democratic India has had to face. We went through the defeat in the Sino-Indian war, we survived the Emergency, 'Operation Bluestar' and the assassination of two Prime Ministers. Yet our institutions remained—the judiciary, the executive, and the legislature—to safeguard all that we had been promised in the preamble of our Constitution. But this time, on that dark day in Ayodhya, these very pillars of democracy were shaken to their very foundation. The Supreme Court order was openly flouted, law and order collapsed completely, the Centre and the State colluded by commission and omission in violating the promise of secularism. The press, sometimes called the Fourth Estate, was penalised for simply being present. And over the next few days more than a thousand Indians—Hindus and Muslims—died in riots in which sometimes the police participated. And four State Governments came under President's Rule.

The author, a young journalist, was a witness to the December 6, 1992 incidents and had a taste of the kar sevaks' *fury at Ayodhya.*

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THE anguish as I watched the Babri structure crumbling on December 6, 1992 was not over the collapse of a building but the fact that it exposed the weakness of the Indian state. In those five hours it seemed that the very democracies and freedoms I had taken for granted were frozen and all the institutions that guarded them were helpless. I saw the CRPF march out, single file, when the *kar sevaks* began to break the law of the Supreme Court openly and hack away at the structure. I saw cops eating and distributing sweets after the demolition was complete. I saw the BJP MPs hugging each other in joy even though the law had been broken.

At first we thought that the *kar sevaks* would simply plant a flag on the middle dome and leave. But the two turned to hundreds and ropes were let down in a systematic manner for more to climb up. We were naive enough to think that the security forces would arrive any minute.

We were wrong. No arm of the government came to save the situation. No CRPF, no PAC, no RAF. For the whole day. And the few journalists who tried to record the *kar sevaks*' "moment of glory" were beaten up mercilessly with the police looking on. That was the day I realised that perhaps the decay in all our institutions was here to stay.

That is why Ayodhya cannot end with the latest death toll. That disused mosque-mandir will overshadow the life of all Indians forever and shape the India to come. Conversations, talks, interviews with politicians, political analysts, artists, academics, students, entrepreneurs and newsmen also paint a bleak picture of events to unfold.

All mention polarisation. Polarisation at all levels. In political parties, in the polity and among the people. "The colour grey will not exist, it will be either black or white. People now have to fight for what they believe in, even a liberal India," says theatre artiste, M.K. Raina.

At the political level, the immediate polarisation is between the Bharatiya Janata Party on one side and the Congress-I and the National Front-Left Front alliance on the other. The secular versus the fundamental. While now the BJP is fighting with its back to the wall, the obvious chaos in the secular front will give it more strength. A basic difference on the new economic policy between the National Front which wants the Prime Minister to resign and the Left which does not, between the CPI and the CPM on the dissolution of the three State Governments—Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan—is bound to make the alliance tenuous. At best they can work as successful pressure groups.

Within the Congress itself a second school of thought, led by hardliner Arjun Singh, is gaining importance. Though the MPs are not willing to replace Narasimha Rao with Arjun Singh they are quite willing to work as a pressure group under his leadership. This can only erode the authority of the Prime Minister. He will take one decision to consolidate his own position and then take a counter-decision to hold on to that position. "Witness Narasimha Rao's under-reaction and over-reaction to the BJP," former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar says. To consolidate the Hindu vote for himself and his party, Narasimha Rao did not take pre-emptive action or even act when he got the news that the demolition of the Babri Masjid had begun; but, under pressure from the increasingly vocal section, later dismissed the three BJP Governments on filmsy grounds.

This has once again given the BJP an upper hand in its tussle with the Congress for the consolidated Hindu vote. The Congress-I, in a bid to woo this vote, got its then Home Minister, Buta Singh, to perform *shilanyas* in Ayodhya before the 1989 election. But the BJP hijacked the vote through the *rath yatra*. Then the Congress tried to get back the initiative by voting alongwith the BJP against the V.P. Singh Government on the Mandir issue. But the Congress-I seemed to be only mildly pro-Hindu compared with the aggressive attitude of the BJP.

So now it see-saws between its secular, sometimes pro-minority, image and its pro-Hindu image. But the return of the Muslim vote to the Congress fold which had begun has stopped once more with the demolition of the mosque. "The Muslim psyche is damaged," admitted Prime Minister Narasimha Rao. But what is being done to repair the damage?

It's a 'heads you win, tails I lose' situation. If he rebuilds the mosque the majority will again feel that the Congress is following a policy of appeasement with the minorities and if he does not build the mosque all minorities in the country will feel insecure.

The dismissal of the three State Governments has come in for as much flak as the demolition. Journalist Kuldip Nayar and lawyer Upendra Baxi both felt that "this was an arbitrary abuse of a constitutional provision". You can only dismiss State Governments on two conditions—if they lose their majority in the assembly or if there is a breakdown in the constitutional machinery. The first is not applicable and on the second count the record of the Congress-ruled States, such as Maharashtra, is much worse.

This can only legitimise the grouse of Hindus that the pro-Hindu governments are being discriminated against in violation of constitutional provisions. And this will lead to a Hindu backlash and further polarisation. The announcement of the ban by the Prime Minister on the RSS-VHP and the deals in implementing it has also given them a fillip. So has the arrests of the BJP leaders. Hence the change in attitude from "unfortunate and regrettable" (Vajpayee) to "what about the temples in Kashmir?" (Advani).

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AND the impact of the political turmoil on the polity of India? Social gaps will widen and militancy grow. Keeping arms will become acceptable. This will lead to more social tension. "Maybe not a civil war but certainly more daily clashes. Election will be bloodier. After all, we do have 2.5 million Muslims in India," said the Janata Dal MP, Sharad Yadav. Parties based on ideologies will become irrelevant, with their hypocrisies and failed promises as a fragmented people will turn to more extreme and facist parties.

A weak Prime Minister, caught by his own desire to stay in office, ambitious subordinates and the

(Continued on page 47)

Secularism and Democracy

G.S. BHARGAVA

Sunil Dutt, who had the moral courage to articulate the anguish of millions of our people at the Bombay killings, has despaired that "the propaganda of the other side is so strong that we have failed to counter it". While the propaganda against secularism has been undoubtedly vociferous, the failure to face it squarely is not on account of its "strength", but due to the BJP and its allies getting away with whatever they say and do and "this side" failing to pin them down on specific issues. In other words, they are scoring more by default like all totalitarian establishments.

A glaring instance was the BJP making issues of democracy and federalism—like the devil quoting the scripture—to fault the Union Government and its supporters while the fires of communal conflict it ignited at Ayodhya were still smouldering. Hitler's initial successes in the 1930s were on a qualitatively similar ploy: while carrying out annihilation of the minorities, especially the Jews, and feverishly preparing for the conquest of neighbouring countries he appeared to be speaking for Germany, aggrieved by the unjust Versailles Treaty.

The BJP has spread the impression that secularism and democracy do not have to go together in a vast and diverse country like ours with different religions, languages and ethnic identities by singling out secularism for onslaught while pretending to champion the cause of democracy. That democracy and secularism together constitute the bedrock of our republic and that diluting or jettisoning one of them will impair the edifice grievously is cleverly clouded over.

The irony was that the tactic was effectively deployed when the organic linkage between democracy and secularism was graphically highlighted by the Ayodhya outrage and its traumatic after-math. The Constitution was nearly destroyed—more grievously than even during the 1975 "Emergency"—and democracy reduced to a competition in mobilising people on sectarian lines. A leader of the stature of L.K. Advani revived the dogma of the Crusades that faith, distorted into intolerance of diversity and pluralism, was beyond the pale of the rule of law and has been a party, at least by acquiescence, to reducing religion which is widely seen as a stimulant of human perfection to a banal vehicle of hate and violence.

The author, a senior journalist, was the Principal Information Officer of the Press Information Bureau, Government of India, in the late seventies.

Conversely, during the 1975 "Emergency" Mrs Gandhi had claimed to defend secularism at the cost of democracy and even well-meaning upholders of secularism like the CPI were taken in by it to go along with her. A non-secular party like the Jan Sangh of which the BJP is a sanitised version had, on the other hand, made common cause with secular parties like the Socialists and the Congress-O to defend democracy. Either tactically or otherwise, the Jan Sangh had then subordinated its championship of Hindu interests to the larger task of restoring democracy. Why? Because it realised the relevance of secularism to democracy and in the process leaders like Atal Behari Vajpayee and Advani achieved a national stature.

Not having been involved in the freedom struggle—the RSS too did not join it on the pretext of its aversion for non-violence—the Jan Sangh was late in grasping the Indian ethos which is reflected in the labours of our Constitution-makers. They made their commitment to secularism crystal-clear by ensuring equal rights for all and providing for tolerance of diversity. They opted for adult franchise without any qualifications, although the bulk of our people were unlettered.

A respected BJP leader like Vajpayee has, in his Lok Sabha speech on the no-confidence motion, made much of the fact that the adjective, secular, was added to the preamble of the Constitution by the 42nd Amendment in 1976. But he overlooked the other part of the truth that the 44th Amendment of 1978, enacted by the Janata Government of which the Jan Sangh was a constituent had left it untouched while undoing most other changes. Why? Because while Mrs Gandhi's reasons for needlessly sticking the label were questionable, dropping it consciously would have impaired the implicit secular character of the polity shaped by the founding fathers and weakened the democratic fabric itself.

Vajpayee and Advani were members of the Central Cabinet then. So was Sikandar Bakht, although he did not then belong to the Jan Sangh constituent. They did even seek the deletion of the adjective from the preamble, much less press for it. Considering the rabid anti-Muslim outlook of the Jan Sangh it was much more than a tactical change. For instance, hardly a couple of decades earlier the Jan Sangh had fomented a communal riot in Delhi by launching a violent agitation against Bakht marrying a Hindu girl!

More positively, the Prasar Bharati Bill—prepared under Advani's guidance and piloted by him in Parliament—had described our culture as "composite", an anathema to the Jan Sangh and also perhaps for the BJP. For some inexplicable reason it was changed in P. Upendra's 1989 version of the legislation which now adorns the statute book.

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AT the more practical level, there have been no doubt several grave departures from the secular ideal. It is largely because our society has failed to keep pace with the polity. This is true of the working of our democracy also, with muscle and money power determining the outcome of elections and legislators selling their conscience for money and power. More basically, one of the directive principles of state policy (Article 45 of the Constitution) has laid down that "the State shall endeavour to provide, *within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution,* for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years." (emphasis added) Apart from the rider of a time limit of ten years for carrying out the directive, it was seriously mooted by the Constitution-makers that the provision should be made justiciable so that the executive would be accountable in the matter. But the idea was not pursued on account of an unfortunate assumption that the moral obligation would be equally binding.

It has not been so during the last 42 years, with the result that the principle of adult franchise is vitiated by massive illiteracy among the electors. Parties have vied with each other in reducing the voting age by a stroke of the executive pen but there has been no similar urge to strive for universal primary education. Parties like the BJP harp on Article 44—the directive principle regarding a uniform civil code—as if it is the only dead letter in the Constitution. In fact, a vested interest has developed in keeping the mass of our people illiterate and backward so that they can be convenient pawns in the game of power politics.

This is not to say that a uniform civil code is not important and necessary. But enacting legislation for the purpose will hardly serve the purpose as the fate of the fundamental right abolishing untouchability shows. If parties like the BJP had made use of their immense capacity to mobilise the people to reform even Hindu society—accounting for over 80 per cent of the population—the dichotomy between our largely stagnant society and cherished polity would have been bridged. But politicians of all hues opt for short cuts like deifying Dr Ambedkar instead of ameliorating the lot of the Harijans and making an issue of a common civil code without preparing the people for it.

The BJP demand for a uniform civil code is often accompanied by a charge that the failure of successive governments to carry out the directive principle in the last 40 odd years was on account of favouritism for the Muslims. Far from it, although the Muslim establishment has always objected to the reform as if to help the BJP.

Further, as Dr Ambedkar pointed out in the Constituent Assembly, only in respect of laws governing marriage and succession there is no uniformity. Otherwise, there is a uniform civil law. Secondly, according to a 1975 report of the committee on the status of women, the incidence of polygamy among Hindus was 5.8 per cent as against 5.7 per cent among Muslims. While the latter is legal, its practice among Hindu men is against the law but prevalent nonetheless. In fact, instances of Hindu men seeking to have a second wife converting to Islam are also there.

The same is the experience with inheritance laws. If one leaves out the changes brought about by the Telugu Desam Government in Andhra Pradesh, the daughter's inheritance rights under the law are circumscribed compared to those of the male child. The practice is even worse than the letter of the law. The argument of most Hindu fathers and their male offspring is that the dowry paid at the time of the daughter's marriage is her share of the inheritance.

Property-owners, no doubt, constitute a very small proportion of the population. But more than the value of the inheritance the very right to it gives a sense of independence to women. I found in Andhra Pradesh women proudly showing off a thatched house as their inheritance. But it is one thing to enact legislation and quite another to see it implemented. If the BJP is genuinely concerned about the progress of Hindus there are any number of ways it can help reform the community. Above all, the Hindu Code which is now accepted as a boon to Hindus is on the statute book not because of the BJP but in spite of its earlier incarnation, Jan Sangh, resisting it in the company of Swami Rameshwaranand and others.

In this context, the enactment of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill to override the Supreme Court judgement in the Shah Bano case by the Rajiv Gandhi Government in 1986 was a severe setback to democracy as well as secularism. The judgement—by the then Chief Justice, Chandrachud, and others—stressed the central issue of treatment of women generally, and Muslim women in particular, and put the weight of the law on the side of the disadvantaged segment. But the stray reference in it to the need for a uniform civil code attracted the attention of Advani and Syed Shahabuddin, the former to acclaim it and the latter to make it a pretext to unleash a campaign against the verdict.

In the end, the real losers were the Muslim women who were pushed back to the confines of a narrow definition of their personal law in the name of a relatively better financial deal on divorce. The BJP cleverly used the occasion to force the panicky government to open the doors of the recently destroyed Ayodhya mosque for Hindu worshippers, the first major step to the recent outrage. The Muslim leadership was hoist with its own petard by insisting on putting the clock of reform back and landing the community in its present plight. But while the BJP waxes eloquent on the Shah Bano episode, presenting it as appeasement of the community and not the vested interests in it, its leadership conveniently overlooks the price it extracted in the unholy bargain.

To sum up, how deep is the BJP's commitment to democracy? And how does it square with its tactics of creating unstable conditions by extra-constitutional agitations and mob violence and demanding elections as a way out of it? On the eve of independence the Muslim League used similar tactics in Punjab and later at the Centre to stymie the government and win its demands. ■

RUCHIRA GUPTA · After the Demolition

(Continued from page 44)

slipping vote-banks can only cause more panic. It will demean the IAS/IPS and erode government authority. Already a visit to the South Block shows no work is being done. "Who knows how long this government will stay. Why waste time, if we have to re-do everything for a new government which thinks differently," said a Joint Secretary.

This mood of uncertainty prevails because everyone in Delhi feels that the government's hold on power is tenuous and any flashpoint could trigger off an election, or a change in leadership for a short while, followed by election. "Even though none of us wants an election, events may go out of our hands," said a Congress MP from Madhya Pradesh.

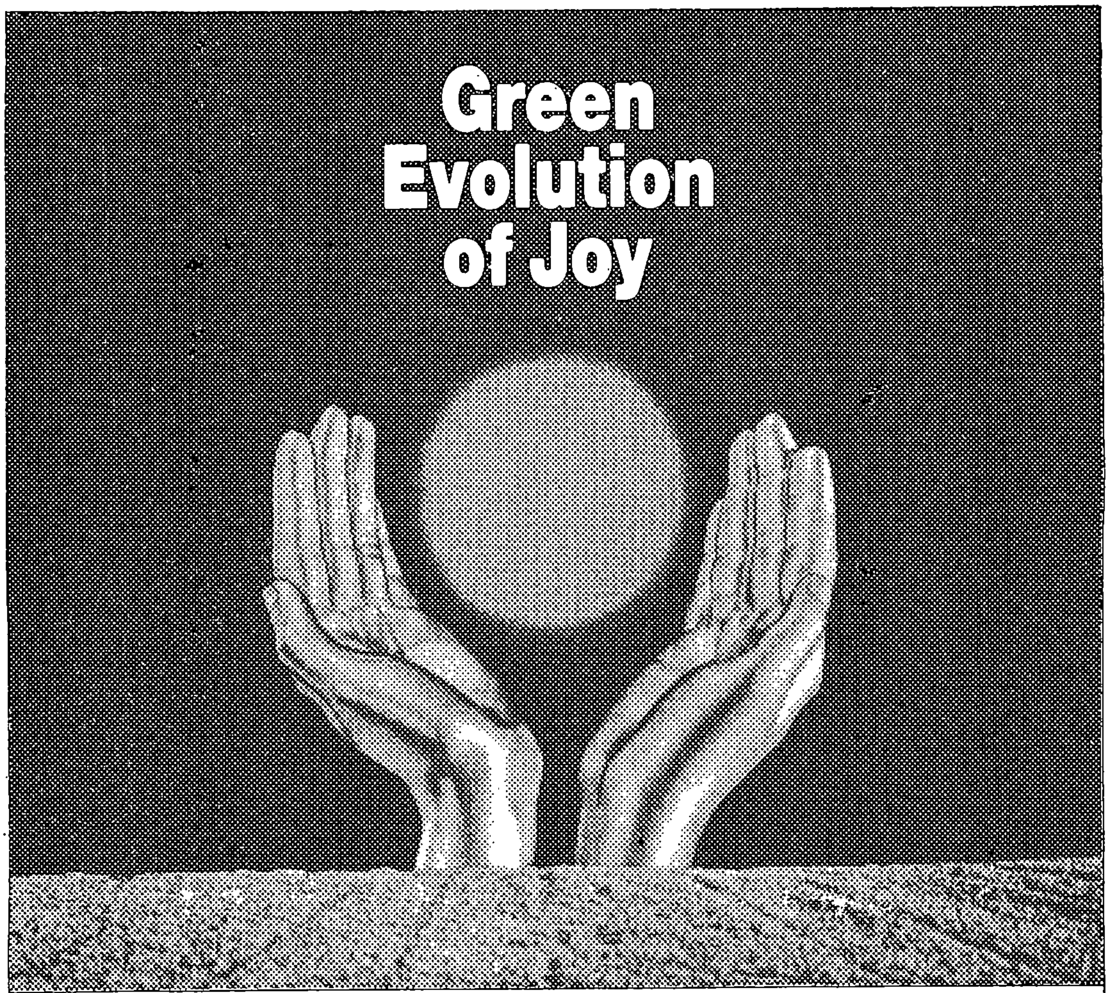
The reason that no Congress, National Front or Left Front MP wants an election is simple. The BJP might come to power with a clear majority. And not just because of its pro-Hindu platform, but because of its perceived unity, lack of waffling, steadily growing 'martyr' image, and the Congress' inability to act in times of crisis.

And the consequences are frightening. The BJP-RSS combine have already scent Delhi. The ban has hardly affected the mother organisation which has 35,000 branches over the country and 2.5 million members. They have 84 affiliated organisations, including the NGOs, which will continue to work towards the objective of a *Hindu Rashtra*, an *Akhand Bharat.*

And this *Rashtra* has no room for our Constitution. "That is a legacy of the British Raj," said a major player in the *Sangh Parivar*, now underground. They (VHP) have formed a Constitution rewriting cell which clearly states that all Indian nationals will be given citizenship on the basis of their loyalty to the *Hindu Rashtra.*

The one automatic gainer, and that too only to an extent, is V.P. Singh who staked his government on the Masjid issue. "He is a leader the minorities feel secure with," says Imam Bukhari. The 27 per cent reservation through the Mandal Commission has also gone in his favour. But his inability to step up a party structure and his politics of exclusion have gone against him.

That is India's tragedy. Unless we can coopt the excluded sections of our society back into the mainstream, we have a grim tomorrow ahead. And this can only be done through political will. But first our leaders will have to regain their credibility. A heartwarming sign is the variety of citizens—from leading industrialists like Ratan Tata to Raunaq Singh—who have come forward to show they care for India. "These citizens groups must form powerful pressure groups on our political parties to push our country back to stability," says Rajni Kothari. Otherwise, as even the Finance Minister Manmohan Singh puts it, "development is the first casualty". ■



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Renewed Western Assault on Iraq

HARISH CHANDOLA

Iraq will not accept the two air-exclusion zones imposed upon it by the three Western powers, the United States, Britain and France.

It was to assert its sovereignty over its air space that its radars in the north had started tracking American warplanes when they entered it on January 21 and 22, and then the Americans tried to destroy them, resulting in the latest air-raids.

These zones were not established by the United Nations but by George Bush in August, when he was trying to get re-elected by presenting himself to his countrymen as a strong leader capable of ordering other countries about.

His two Western allies, Britain and France, were persuaded to support the air-exclusion zones on the ground that these would greatly limit Baghdad's authority and help in breaking up Iraq.

The zone in the north created a safe haven for the Kurds there who have managed to establish a semi-independent area for themselves in it.

But when the zones were imposed, Iraq's neighbours, Iran and Syria, though still opposed to the personality of President Saddam Hussein, rallied to Baghdad's side on this issue. Both President Hashemi Rafsanjani of Iran and President Hafez al-Assad of Syria have since stated that they would not accept the partitioning of Iraq and establishment of zones of American and Western influence in it. Such zones, they said, endangered their security as well.

Not only the two neighbours but most Arab countries, except Kuwait and a few in the Gulf, are opposed to the division of Iraq. Iraq as a country is a proud symbol of the Arab and Islamic peoples because it was the centre of their most glorious age, the Abbasid period. Destroying it would be destroying their history.

No Iraqi, or any other self-respecting leadership, can ever accept such a gross violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity as is being imposed on Iraq by outside powers by controlling most of its air space and denying it to Baghdad.

Iraq, weakened and isolated, is prepared to resolve this dispute with the US and its allies through dialogue, peacefully. President Saddam Hussein had offered to hold talks with the US on it, but President Bush declined.

The author, a well-known journalist, is based in Damascus and writes from there.

The other matter Iraq cannot accept is to surrender its rich southern territory, including the port city of Umm Qasr and six wells in the Rumaila oilfield, to Kuwait. A UN Commission has already decreed them to Kuwait.

In fact it is difficult for Iraq to be bound by the ceasefire agreement (UN Resolution 687) which has turned it into a UN-mandated territory.

Under it, the UN weapon inspectors from Western countries hostile to it, can freely fly wherever they like in the name of seeking to discover industrial plants capable of producing weapons.

It was in the course of such investigations that the Western inspectors went to the Zafranieh plant, producing items to rebuild the facilities destroyed by the allied air war of early 1991. After visiting it five times they said they were satisfied that it was not involved in producing weapons.

Not far from it, however, at al-Atheer and al-Hateen, the inspectors destroyed buildings of 24,000 square metres of space, housing technical installations, from April 7 to 15, 1992.

Iraq believes that the inspectors then passed on the information that the Zafranieh plant was making vital items needed for repairing Iraq's war damage. On January 17 the US warships launched 40 cruise missiles to destroy the plant—an action against which its ally, France, has protested. The missiles also destroyed some civilian houses and one of them wrecked Baghdad's magnificent Rashid Hotel.

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THE new air raids on Iraq which began on December 17, and are continuing, have greatly angered the Arab people. Some of that anger has started finding expression in the statements of the Arab League and some Arab leaders.

No Arab regime, however close to the US, except that of Kuwait, has endorsed these raids. Almost every single Arab newspaper, except in Kuwait, has condemned the double standards of the three Western powers which ignore the violation of the UN resolutions by Israel, but are quick to go in for vengeful destruction of Iraq, without the authority of the world body.

Their raids were described as a continuation of the old gunboat policy of the West by a Syrian political observer who did not want to be named.

In Amman, King Hussein of Jordan said as much. He said the "purposeless" raids made him angry and sad and also destroyed the chance of resolving the dispute through dialogue.

Libya's Colonel Muamar Gaddafi rushed to Cairo on January 19 to meet with President Husni Mubarak of Egypt to coordinate Arab opposition to the attacks. He did not succeed. But the raids were denounced in Sudan, Yemen and Syria.

It is well-known that Arab Kings, Emirs and dictators seldom give expression to popular opinion because quite a few are allies of the West and others are afraid of it.

The raids came at a time when the picture before the common Arab people was that of 418 Palestinians, torn from their homes and dumped in Lebanon's barren no-man's land by Israeli security forces, to perish there of destitution and cold in violation of the UN resolutions.

The raids came as the Arabs witnessed with anger the daily killing of unarmed Palestinian women and children in the Occupied Territories by Israeli troops, also in violation of the UN resolutions.

While subjected to this injustice, the Arabs saw the Western allies launching their planes and missiles against Iraq, wrecking its best hotel, destroying homes and a factory, and killing over 70 civilians, without any international sanction.

The Arab people believed that the attacks were the result of the peevishness of the outgoing President Bush, who had lost his election in spite of projecting himself as the hero of the Gulf war. He was going out, while Saddam Hussein, whom he had tried to topple militarily and politically, was still there. Saddam had not only strengthened his position but also rebuilt his country in less than two years of the war, in spite of the embargo.

On the other hand, leaders of the Western alliance against him were vanishing. Margaret Thatcher was gone, and so was Itzhak Shamir of Israel. Turkey's Turgut Ozal had lost power. Bush was bowing out. The Saudi ruling family and the Egyptian regime were facing stiff opposition at home for being part of the Western alliance.

In Saudi Arabia, where most Western warplanes that rain death on Iraq are based, religious elements have, since the Gulf war, been openly opposing the ruling family from pulpits of mosques for inviting the Western military forces on its soil, to invade Iraq. Recorded tapes of their sermons and other criticism of corruption and nepotism of the ruling family are now available throughout the country in stores selling religious items.

King Fahd was so incensed by this mounting crescendo of criticism of his family and regime that last month he dismissed seven elderly members of the country's highest religious body, the Supreme Authority of Senior Scholars, of 17.

Earlier, 107 leaders of the country's highest religious institutions and universities had submitted an ultimatum to the King, which they called a "Memorandum of Advice", opposing the government policies and demanding a break in relations with the West.

The alliance against Iraq is thus not only becoming small, but also showing serious cracks in it. Russia wants to be out of it, and even France, whose planes participated in bombing Iraq on January 18, is now uncomfortable. Its spokesman said on January 19 that action against Iraq should be appropriate and proportionate, suggesting that his government considered the latest action excessive.

Arab observers are surprised by the silence of the non-aligned world over these unauthorised, vengeful raids on one of its members. "Is the movement finally dead?" they wondered in their conversation with me.

A few of them had read the Indian statement of January 14 in which a government spokesman had described the attacks as "punitive". "Why punitive?" they asked, when Iraq was cooperating with the UN in implementing its resolutions. The no-fly zones were imposed not by the UN but by George Bush and his allies.

Iraq had offered India free oil, India's costliest import, affecting its economy most. Some observers feel that the Indian Government did not have the courage to accept it because that would have greatly displeased the West. Tiny Jordan did, in spite of the embargo on Iraq.

Iraq was a firm supporter of India at the powerful 46-nation Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). At one of its meetings a proposal was made that the Islamic countries should impose sanctions on India for suppressing Muslims in Kashmir. Iraq was the only member to oppose it totally.

Arab observers feel that the acceptance of no-fly zones could present a danger to India itself. Any outside power wanting to seek intervention in Kashmir could, some day, propose a no-fly zone over it. Therefore India must, in its own interest, oppose the imposition of such zones which violate the sovereignty of a country over its territory. ■

Mirage in Gulf Politics

NILOFAR TAHIR RIZVI

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new...to change...," said President Clinton during his inaugural address. "Change", because as he said, he is not there, just to "warm" his seat. Political observers on the West Asian front have reason to speculate on what can his "change" on the Iraq front be. The cease-fire allowing the United Nations to enter Iraq is perhaps timely for Clinton to consider the next American move in the region.

Clinton's foreign objective centering on promotion of American interests, raises speculations about the continuation of Bush's policy of using force against Iraq. In certain American circles, it is held, that force should be used till Saddam is "dumped" or remains no more. This is apparently guided by the assumption that the successor Iraqi Government will probably have no alternative but to turn to US dependency; which could be an economic and political asset to promote American interests in the Gulf.

Political insight on regional politics in the Gulf, however, seems to caution against one being over-optimistic of the "demise" or "extermination" of Saddam Hussain yielding to a favourable turn of events for the United States. Mirage in the Gulf can reduce political expectations also to the state of mere illusion. Not many years ago, following the death of Khomeini, American analysts had expected the next Iranian regime to turn to the USA. However, apart from not turning to the USA, the Iranian Government said "no" to the US offer and accepted the Soviet Union's assistance. Irrespective of political calculation or otherwise, this in part probably led American analysts to give greater focus to Iran's ever-formidable rival, Saudi Arabia.

Expectations of post-Khomeini Iran turning to the USA rested on the speculation that the Islamic fundamentalism heralded earlier would definitely ebb away in the coming years. Remarkably, however, a reverse order, that is, the spread and gaining in strength of the Islamic wave, appears to be gradually reasserting itself in greater parts of the world.

Paradoxically, whether Saddam remains in power, or someone else takes over, it is possible that either leader may succumb greatly to this Islamic wave. This is possible for a number of reasons. In the face of considerable domestic disruption, particularly economic, any Iraqi leader may find religion a strong diplomatic tool to stay in power, keeping the potential dissidence under control, and getting aid from particularly co-religionist powers.

Islamic fundamentalism, Pan-Arabism, the regional waves that had reached their earlier peak in 1989, slowing down in the succeeding years, may probably ride high again. In part, such waves had slowed down because of the shift in American policy towards the region, symbolised specially by taking the Palestinian issue more seriously, and being less soft towards Israel. Currently the strike againt Iraq, the deportation of Palestinians, the Bosnian crisis and communal tension in India, all have elements of Muslims being victimised wantonly, without the United Nations taking any prompt or serious action. The combination of these has the potential to give greater crest to the growing Islamic wave. Diplomatically it may also be considered a strategic tool to caution Clinton from moving too close to Israel, and thereby alienating the Arab states.

Undeniably, going by the media-based reports, the average Iraqi does not think well of Bush's policy towards Iraq. Further, despite Saddam's offers, it may be considered very un-American and undiplomatic of Clinton to even give an ear to him. Besides, considering the destruction Iraq has undergone, to keep there a government favouring the USA can be a very expensive move for America. Thereby, whether Saddam is toppled by force or not, any Iraqi leader cannot remain in the American camp for too long—speculatively and realistically.

Paradoxically, what has perhaps been a costly exercise for the US can be economically beneficial for the former Soviet Union, if Iraq opens up for the latter's help.

Economically, politically, and diplomatically the usage of force against Iraq, is apparently an expensive move for the USA. Instead, it may be wiser realistically, to exercise multilateral diplomacy, that is, letting the issue stay in the United Nations' agenda, at least for the present! ■

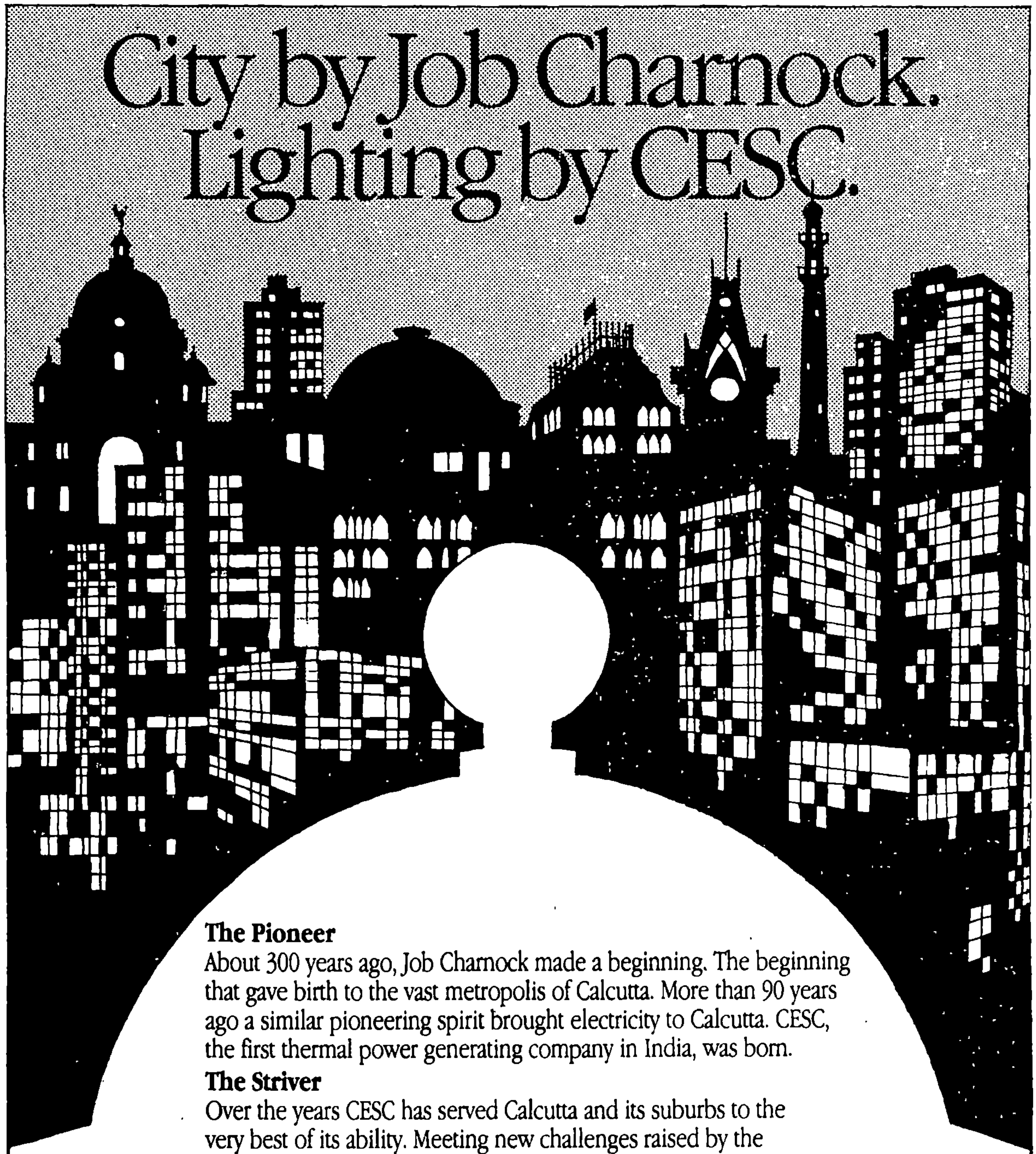
The author is a free-lance journalist currently based in the US.

Gopal Gandhi's poem *Rubble* appeared in *Mainstream* (December 19, 1992). On reading the poem one of our readers—A.A. Latiff (of 14, 4th Lane, Koswatta Road, Rajagiriya, Sri Lanka)—wrote the following poem which he has kindly sent to us for publication. —*Editor*

Rabble

In other lands too
Pure and Golden
The rabble
Roused themselves to fury
And devoured in flames
Sacred precincts
Where men adore God.
Now
Imprint forever the mark
Of Cain on your shameless for'heads
With those ashes.

—A.A. Latiff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Defending Secular Values

SHIEKH MUJIBUR REHMAN

The demolition of the Babri Masjid and the widespread violence that ensued thereafter have raised doubts regarding the secular practices of the Indian state. In spite of the 'spontaneous outbreak' of the incident, a brief survey of the cycle of events would reveal that it is a consequence of the Bharatiya Janata Party's extensive mobilisation of the people on this issue over the last few years.

Survival Strategy

December 6 saw the principal Opposition party of India challenging one of its own provincial governments. On the contrary, no distinction was prevailing at least in the minds of the *kar sevaks* between the party and the government and, of course, the police. "Our Government, Our Party, Our Police" was virtually the spirit as well as the reason that motivated the *kar sevaks* to go ahead amidst the height of religious passions by leaving the "constitutional barricade" far behind. In the backdrop of such a scenario, it would not be unfair to argue that possibly the police arrangements were made to look after the *kar sevaks* instead of the Babri Masjid. Surprisingly, though the Bharatiya Janata Party has owned "moral responsibility", it has not condemned the incident as yet. The gesture, therefore, is a part of its 'survival strategy' within the democratic parliamentary framework of Indian politics simultaneously giving approval as well as leadership to all these anti-constitutional acts.

Misuse of Article 356

The repeated assurances given by the BJP Government of Uttar Pradesh to the Supreme Court as well as to the Centre and the 'guilt' of being dubbed as 'undemocratic, and authoritarian' inhibited the Narasimha Rao Government to invoke Article 356 apprehending the, "failure of the constitutional machinery of the State". A valid basis does exist in this 'guilt-consciousness' as the Centre has misused it several times against the "Opposition ruled States" in the past. This is the reason why the Narasimha Rao Government could not have escaped the charge of "authoritarian tendencies" even on an issue of this proportion from democratic public opinion. Despite the fact that the Narasimha Rao Government was armed with the 'total support' of all non-BJP political parties through a resolution in the last National Integration Council. In other words, the past misuse has decisively shattered the moral basis to use the constitutional weapon at a time when it was needed most. The political leadership must admit the price that the nation had to pay for this act and must avoid such a grave political error in future.

The author is a Research Scholar in the Department of Political Science, Delhi University.

Dilemma of Twin Tasks

The secular leadership of India is committed to the twin tasks of advancing the principles of secularism and containing the forces of fundamentalism. In case of the Indian Muslims the 'object' of secular ideology and the 'target' of the anti-fundamentalist drive by and large remain the same. They thus provide a peculiar irony resulting in enormous complexities in carrying forward the secular functions. Two factors at least must be taken into consideration to explain this irony. One is the inability the of the secular leaders to emerge as mass-leaders of the Muslims. To which the political parties have also contributed by making religion as almost an inevitable criterion while fielding their party candidates in at least the Muslim majority constituencies during elections. Secondly, the near absence of an educated middle class among Muslims.

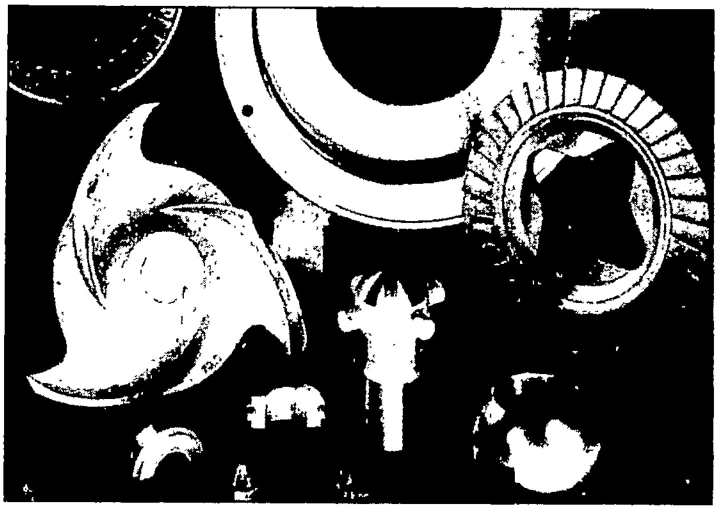
From the point of view of democratic consciousness, one would figure broadly two classes among Indian Muslims. One is the vast lower class—unfortunately under the influence of religious leaders—and the other a tiny upper class mostly alienated from the grassroots. It is the latter which reaps the benefits from the power-structure through political patronage. And turns out to be the 'symbol' of development of the community.

Beyond Government

In spite of all these events, one should affirm that the Indian society is by and large a secular and a tolerant one. Widespread killings and violence are the consequences of a systematic campaign carried on over the last few years which demonstrates that the society has enormous potential for violence too. Unfortunately, almost all the dominant political parties have underplayed the significance of such a campaign.

One should keep in mind that the Indian Government is not synonymous with Indian society. It is, therefore, incumbent upon the entire political leadership to work beyond the governmental and party apparatus to defend secular values—which is the bedrock of our democratic society. And an equally important task lies on the shoulders of the 'autonomous individuals' such as artists, writers, intellectuals to convey their message beyond their own spheres of influence. In essence, this would help to create conditions where secularism would make sense. ■

WEAR PREVENTION FROM THE OUTSET



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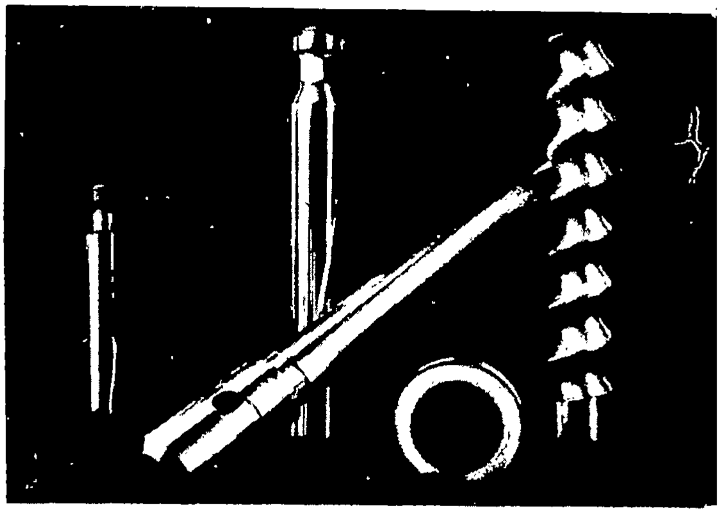

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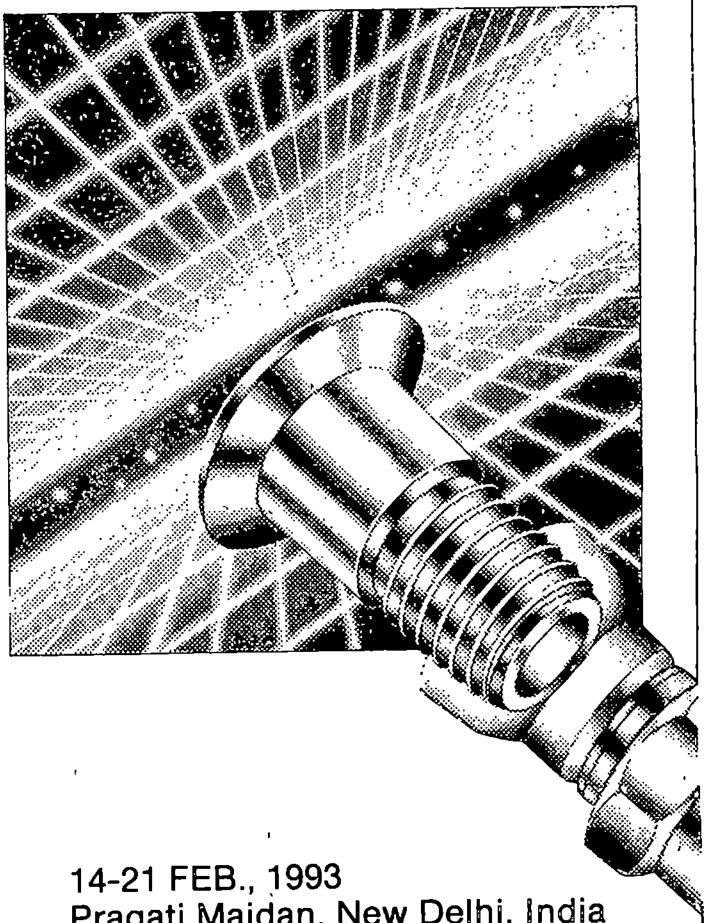

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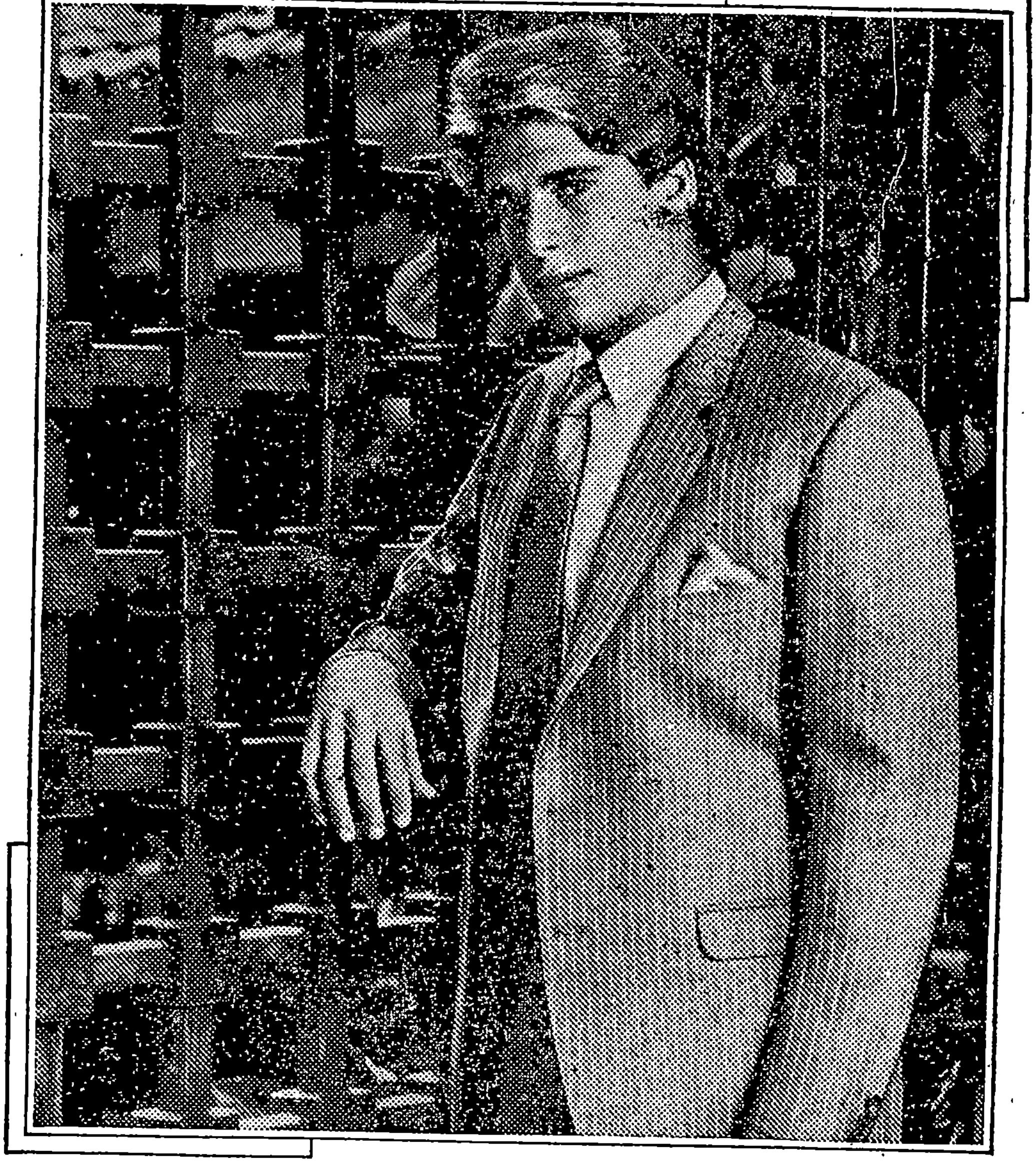

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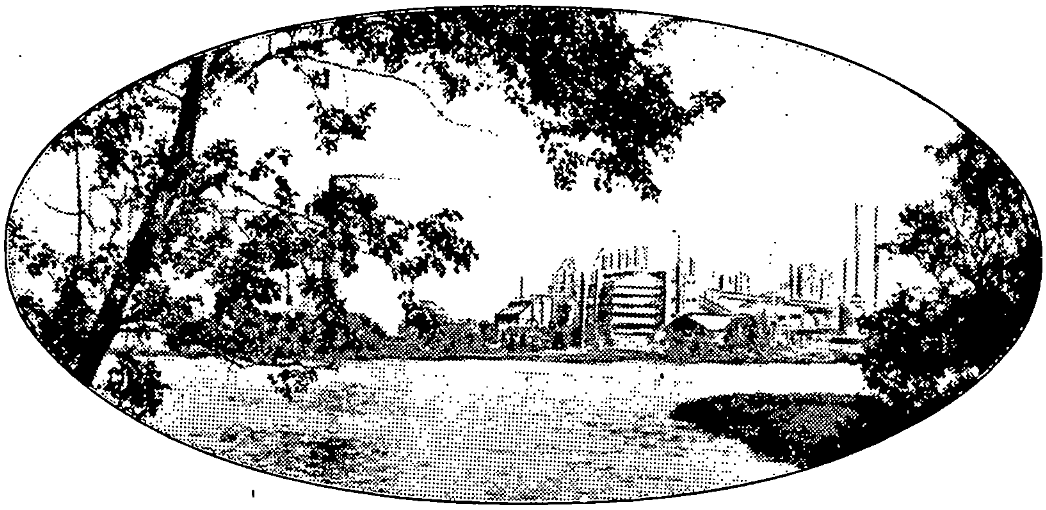

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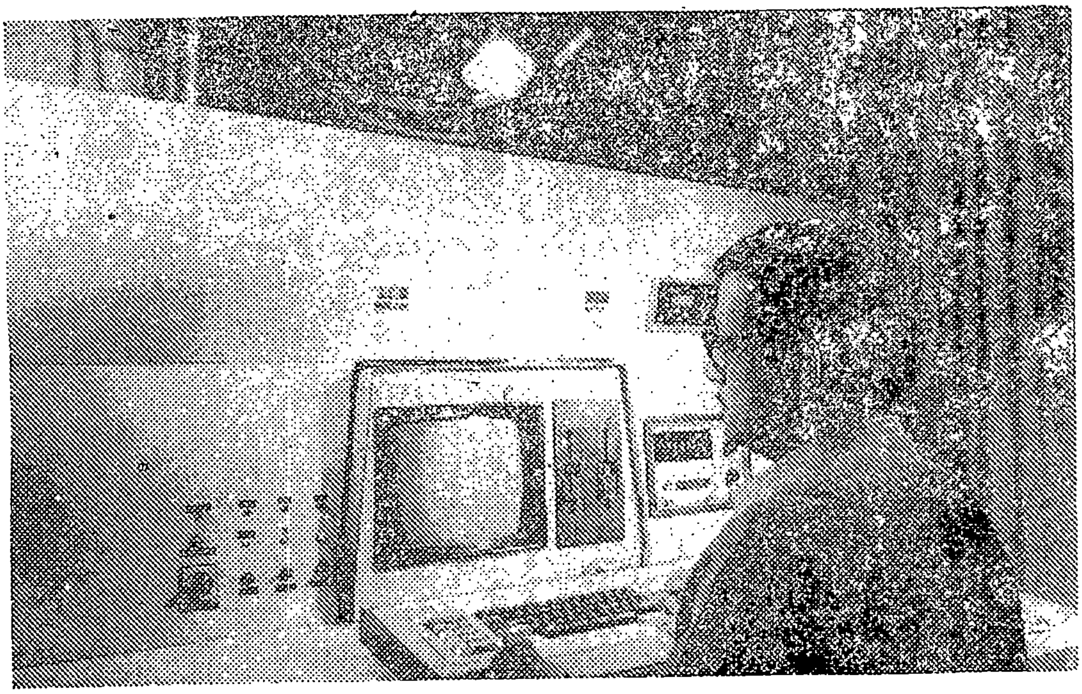

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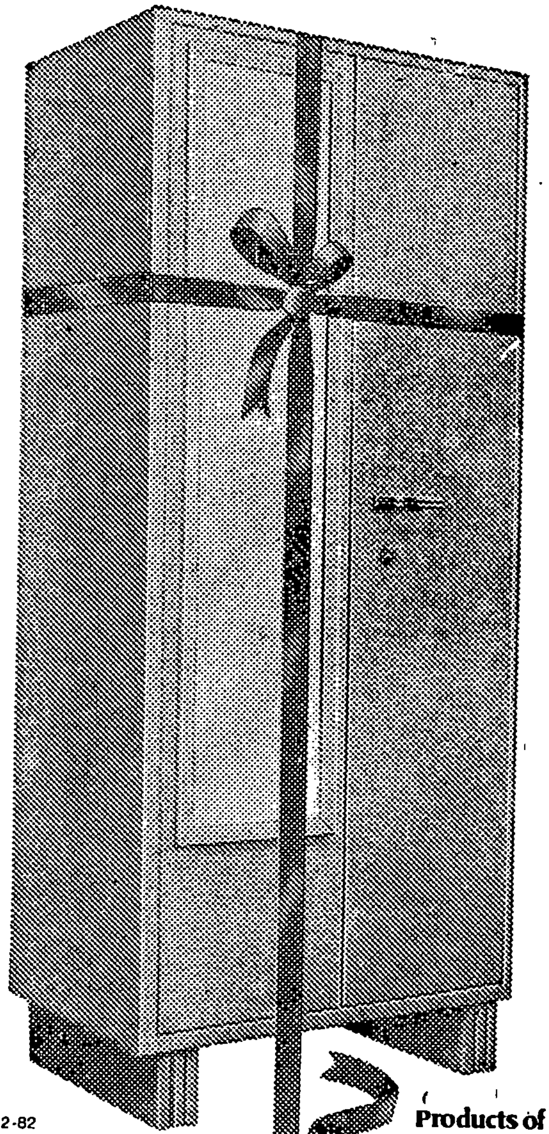

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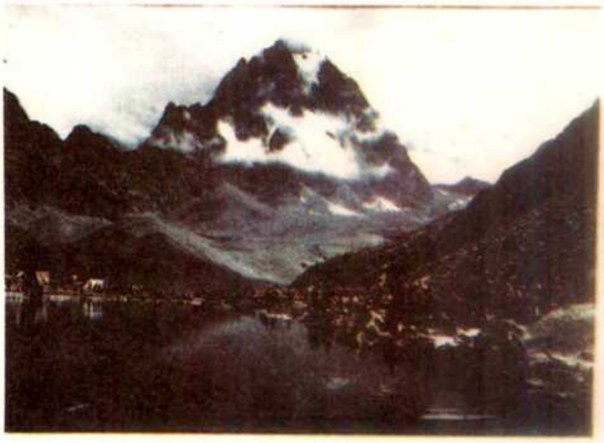

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Kashmir Temples • Surat Riots • Yeltsin Visit

Mainstream

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EDITORIAL

Grave Implications

The ruling party continues to be a divided house. The marathon session of the just-concluded Congress Working Committe has resultd in the top leaders voicing confidence in P.V. Narasimha Rao's stewardship of the party by making it clear that the one-man-one-post concept did not apply to the Congress President who happens to be the Prime Minister as well. But even if the attack by the dissidents led by Arjun Singh, the Human Resource Development Minister, has been warded off this in itself is a temporary reprieve for Narasimha Rao and there has been nothing to suggest that concrete steps are being taken to promote unity in the party ranks.

In the light of Arjun Singh's campaign against the leadership, particularly Narasimha Rao, the CWC stressed the need for "enforcement of discipline" and called for "effective functioning of the Disciplinary Action Committee". The words sound empty and hollow on account of the organisation's manner of functioning since the Tirupati session of the Congress in April last year. Even the CWC and AICC meetings have been far from regular. In fact it was quite strange that the leadership, and Narasimha Rao in particular, did not deem it necessary to hold the CWC meeting soon after the December 6, 1992 events at Ayodhya. Not only is there is no sense of urgency in dealing with the crisis flowing from the communal menace, the leadership is essentially gripped by inertia and complacency that would prove costly and dangerous in the long run.

The issues raised by Arjun Singh are doubless noteworthy. Pointing to the growing clout of the communal forces represented by the BJP he told the CWC meet: "Today it seems that they are on the centre-stage, and we are getting marginalised. This Working Committee must deliberate as to why this has happened." In this context he felt the failure to act was the biggest failure of the party.

This criticism is most pertinent and absolutely valid. Regardless of the quarter from which it has come—the dissidents headed by Arjun Singh (who is keen to oust Narasimha Rao and step into the Prime Minister's shoes at the earliest possible opportunity)—the party must address itself to this feeling which is shared by the public at large. The expression of confidence in Narasimha Rao by the party leadership has no meaning if the Congress President holding the reins of power at the Centre refuses to act with vigour, determination and purposefulness and prevent the *Sangh Parivar* from taking the

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initiative and setting the agenda before the people.

Arjun Singh, of course, has no moral ground to stand on. His allegation that the Prime Minister was negotiating with the sants and BJP leaders as also the UP Government without consulting his Cabinet colleagues, cannot possibly be brushed aside. But what has been his own conduct? Did he, at any point, try to object to the Prime Minister's approach on that score as it militated against the politics of consensus assiduously sought to be promoted? Obviously not. Hence his complaints and attacks on Narasimha Rao—naturally an afterthought—are all connected with the game of power politics at the higher echelons of the ruling Congress.

Nonetheless, there is no gainsaying that the inability of the Centre to compel the Maharashtra Government to move and take stringent action against the Shiv Sena hoodlums running amok in Bombay has exposed the bankruptcy of the Narasimha Rao administration. The hideous face of the BJP too has been unmasked—especially with L.K. Advani's direct and indirect support to the Shiv Sainiks in the metropolis—but that cannot blur the Congress leadership's criminal negligence in taking strong measures to stamp out fratricidal violence.

In this setting the BJP-sponsored rally in the Capital on February 25 poses yet anther serious problem. Apprehensions that the rallyists could turn violent and target a particular community are not in the least exaggerated. After what happened two months ago on December 6 at Ayodhya the BJP's protestations have lost all value. That is why the minimum that is expected of the ruling party is to preserve peace and communal amity in the Capital without recourse to measures that could be construed as an assault on democracy.

But given the Narasimha Rao Government's record it is becoming increasingly difficult to repose faith in its capacity to live upto those expectations. At the same time it must be realised that the bankruptcy of the Centre over the last two months—reflected also in the results of the CWC meet—has grave implications for our polity as a whole.

February 10 S.C.

Danger Signal from Bombay

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

The time has come when we have to seriously ask ourselves if we are really serious about preserving in one piece this Republic of India. Many in our country think that to talk about disintegration of the Indian Union is just a fantasy with an overdose of panic. They can't take it that we may have taken the road to Bosnia.

Three months ago, this impression was widespread. It can't happen here—was the average Indian reaction when the mighty USSR fell apart without a whimper, and when Yugoslavia's break-up brought a lot of blood and tears. Today, particularly after December 6 at Ayodhya, has come out a fearsome calamity in its hideous manifestation in Bombay in the wake of Ayodhya. It has not really died down: the embers are hot and a flare-up can take place any day, any time.

The issue that projected itself at Ayodhya and then at Bombay is not just a Hindu-Muslim conflict. This has now taken the form of a direct assault on the authority of the Indian Union itself. One wonders if the leaders who indulged in the histrionics at Ayodhya on December 6 realised the implication of what they were doing.

What happened at Ayodhya on December 6 was not just a squabble for demolishing a Masjid to make room for a Mandir—however offensive such a move might be in a democratic order. More than the mosque-temple dispute was the outrageous assault on both the executive and the judicial authority of the Republic of India.

To gain a full view of the matter, taking into account all the serious implications of the swift destruction of the Babri Masjid, one cannot ignore how this has subverted the authority of the state power in the Indian Union. The Prime Minister had solemnly assured Parliament and reiterated it in his address to the nation on August 15 that the mosque would be protected pending its settlement by negotiation or due process of law. The Supreme Court of India, through meticulous examination of all aspects of the dispute, extracted .from the Government of the Uttar Pradesh the categoric assurance that the mosque would be protected in the face of the huge assembly of people scheduled there on that day. By their swift operation razing the entire mosque, the authors of the operation not only accentuated the Hindu-Muslim tension with all its frightening consequences as was witnessed in the days immediately following December 6, but struck a direct blow at the authority of the Indian state since they by their action repudiated the solemn assurance of the chief executive of the Republic as also defied the mandate of the apex court of the Indian Union.

At that point of time, the overwhelming public concern was about the serious outburst of communal violence in many parts of the country. The damage to the fabric of the Republic was yet to be gauged. It was only when Bombay was once again engulfed in a vicious outbreak of violence a month afterwards, in the second week of January, that one could realise how the December 6 demolition had debilitated the authority of the Indian state.

◆

IT is to be admitted that the ghastly face of the mayhem in Bombay has not been adequately exposed to the rest of the country. It was no ordinary communal riot. The mob violence was part of a prearranged design. It was accompanied by the systematic killing of the Muslim population with extraordinary precision. Muslim houses were specially marked out, their occupants butchered and their belongings destroyed. Even after the mob violence subsided, as late as last week when this writer visited the city, an entire *bustee* was attacked with clinical precision. The operation was conducted by powerful arc lamps fixed on the neighbouring high-rise buildings. And from those buildings, fireballs were thrown into the *bustee* at night, and when the *bustee* dwellers rushed out into the street, they were fired upon by the police for having violated the curfew. The fire brigade could not operate as its path was blocked by the gang whom the police would not touch. It was only the spontaneous intervention by some of the courageous neighbours that could get the army to appear after a considerable lapse of time.

The storm-troopers of this brand of uninhibited fascism belong to the Shiv Sena, with its Fuehrer, Bal Thackeray, spitting venom against the Muslim community as also against all non-Maharashtrians working in Bombay. Extortion money is collected systematically from householders and shopkeepers, whoever come under the Shiv Sena spotlight. He brags about his hideous exploits in international press, while his actions and utterances are not only provocative but are calculatedly meant to terrorise the citizens of this country and are openly defiant of all laws. Shiv Sena notices in front of ration shops warn that no Muslim must be served the ration quota. In some of the factories, Muslim workers are finding it difficult to go back and rejoin work. Thousands of terror-stricken citizens have fled this metropolis, the hub of the nation's commerce and finance.

A quick estimate of the total cost of Bombay's riots prepared by the Tata Services indicates that the loss of gross value of output of goods and services would be Rs 1250 crores, loss to trading business Rs 1000 crores, loss of exports Rs 2000 crores, loss of tax revenue for the government Rs 150 crores and loss of properties worth about Rs 4000 crores. Tentatively thus the Bombay riots have already cost over Rs 8000 crores.

Going round the city and meeting a wide cross-section of its citizens from the corporate world to the activists at the grassroots, intrepid media persons and senior executives of the advertisement world, professionals and educationists and retired government servants and ex-service officers, and trade unionists, one got the same story that the government in Bombay has virtually surrendered to the Shiv Sena, taking no measures to curb its nefarious activities with the police heavily saturated with the Shiv Sena supporters. Ministers from the Centre have been paying widely publicised visits to the hapless city, the Prime Minister himself paid a flying visit. But none is ready to halt the Shiv Sena, not to speak of punishing it. At the other end, the *Sangh Parivar* has virtually surrendered the leadership of their combined alliance to the Shiv Sena, reminding one about Bhindranwala bagging the Akali leadership.

There could be no better climate for putting Bal Thackeray in his place, and prevent the Shiv Sena's unfettered mischief. Today Bombay has witnessed a groundswell of spontaneous activity of citizens from all sections in society to save the city. Relief and rehabilitation work have been taken up in full swing. Protecting the minorities, organising vigilance against Shiv Sena depredations—all these have stirred the conscience of this great city. The affluent and the impoverished have been stirred in a manner never seen before.

There are no chicken hearts except in the government. More than the citizenry of Bombay it is the government, both in the State and at the Centre, who appear to have been scared and browbeaten by Bal Thackeray's hoodlum gangs. If this monstrous phenomenon is permitted to roam around unfettered by the constraints of law, then that will be the beginning of the end of the Republic. ■

(February 5)

Rajni Kothari's article "Refashioning India", carried in *Mainstream* (January 23, 1993), was reproduced—with due acknowledgement—from the *Seminar* Annual Number 1992.
—*Editor*

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KASHMIR TEMPLES

Fact and Fiction

B.G. VERGHESE

Several leading spokesmen of the BJP and the *Sangh Parivar* have, in the aftermath of the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya on December 6, been loud in proclaiming that the nation, bar themselves, was silent when Hindu temples were destroyed, torched or desecrated in Kashmir in 1989-91. The theme has been well orchestrated and propagated, and has been picked up as an offensive-defensive refrain by many others sympathetic to the BJP-VHP-RSS cause. The purposes have been many: to lend ex-post facto justification for what happened on December 6; to assuage guilt; and indeed to drive home the charge of bias and appeasement being levelled against the so-called pseudo-secularists.

The message has been carried beyond the urban elites to enroll the rural masses who have by and large traditionally lived in communal amity.

Systematic disinformation about alleged long-standing and continuing vandalising of Hindu shrines in Kashmir has emerged as a central thrust of the wider BJP-VHP-RSS hate-campaign to achieve and sustain a communal polarisation in the country. This is a dangerous poison to brew. Having investigated some of these allegations of temple-bashing in Kashmir and exposed them as unfounded in two articles published in the *Indian Express* of May 8 and June 11, 1991, I have been surprised to find these articles being strongly denounced 18 months later after the denouement at Ayodhya.

◆

MY interest in the matter goes back to my association with two separate groups in 1990 which attempted to find a via media between the conflicting positions of the VHP-RSS-BJP on the one hand and the Babri Masjid groups on the other. These efforts entailed several meetings with leading spokesmen of the VHP, RSS and BJP at different times in the course of which references were made to the alleged destruction of temples in Kashmir. The underlying thrust of the argument was the unmistakable suggestion that the hurt to Hindu pride and religious sentiment, which the Babri Masjid was seen to represent, was not merely an ancient wrong but a continuing reality, as witnessed by the destruction of Hindu places of worship in Kashmir to this day.

I explained that some temples in Kashmir had indeed been damaged during a period of communal tension in Kashmir early in 1986, mostly in the Anantnag district, but that these shrines had been repaired by the State administration with community participation. This was, therefore, an admitted event and a closed chapter and it would be pointless to rake up this particular episode again and again as communal riots have been prone to produce aberrant actions by hooligans and mobs of all communities. This is well known and well documented. Delhi, for instance, witnessed widespread destruction of gurdwaras by frenzied mobs in 1984. While some people had perhaps got the dates confused, others insisted that temples in Kashmir had been targeted for destruction after 1986.

This was a serious charge and liable to inflame passions, if true. My inquiries, however, indicated that the rumours about contemporary vandalism were untrue and I said so at many of these meetings. Since the point continued to be made, not merely in private but in public meetings by very responsible figures, I kept asking for a list of names, places and dates pertaining to any recent destruction of temples in Kashmir, so that the matter might be suitably investigated and the mischief-makers brought to book, if the charges were true, and the nation apprised of the facts or, alternatively, the rumours be authoritatively scotched and those deliberately spreading such motivated falsehoods be exposed and dealt with.

After persistent efforts, I was able to obtain two lists. The first came from a very senior RSS leader who handed me what I understood to be a carefully collated tabulation by his sources. It mentioned 62 temples "burnt and damaged in Kashmir by terrorists in 1990" by name and listed them district-wise with remarks such as "temple completely burnt", "temples razed to the ground", "idols desecrated", "looted", "damaged" and so on.

The second list came from the Sanatan Dharam, Jammu, and mentioned six temples in different parts of the Valley, including one in Srinagar. The President of the Jammu unit of the BJP, Chaman Lal Gupta, told me in Jammu in January 1991 that over 200 temples had been destroyed in the State. I

Jammu and Kashmir

Damage to Hindu Places of Worship in Jammu and Kashmir during 1992 (As reported by Government of Jammu and Kashmir)

Sl. No.	Date	Name of the Place	Brief particulars
1.	7.12.92	Bana Mohalla, Srinagar	A temple was damaged by fire.
2.	-do-	Dodgi	-do-
3.	-do-	Kulgam	-do-
4.	-do-	Budgam	-do-
5.	-do-	Khurhama	-do-
6.	-do-	Malwathan, Doda District	-do-
7.	-do-	Devnag near Laldraman, Doda	-do-
8.	-do-	Machla, Bhagwa Block, Doda	-do-
9.	-do-	Dooru, Doda District	-do-
10.	9.12.92	Thsekikassi, Rajouri	Explosion in one temple.
11.	-do-	Malote, Rajouri	-do-
12.	-do-	Bongam, Tangmarg	One temple damaged by fire.
13.	-do-	Sambal	Miscreants hurled a bomb towards Narayan Bagh Temple and Patshala building which caught fire and was gutted.
14.	9.12.92	Pulwama	One temple was damaged by fire.
15.	-do-	Srinagar	-do-
16.	10.12.92	Village Palhalan, Baramulla	-do-
17.	-do-	Village Ladoo, Pulwama	A temple was damaged by fire.
18.	-do-	Village Kiligam, District Pulwama	-do-
19.	10.12.92	District Anantnag	8 temples in various places were damaged by fire.
20.	11.12.92	Chak Narain Dass, Tasharg, Baramulla	1 temple was damaged by fire.
21.	-do-	Bonagam, Batapora, Shopian, Pulawam District	-do-
22.	-do-	Anantnag District	-do-
23.	-do-	Bangalgund	-do-
24.	-do-	Akinggam	-do-
25.	-do-	Kaliga	-do-
26.	-do-	Kupwara District	3 temples in different places were damaged by fire.
27.	12.12.92	Village near Kishtwar Town, Doda District	One temple was damaged by fire.
28.	13.12.92	Village Zeevani, Kuddhar, Gurmal and Baldoni (Khilani), Doda District	4 temples were damaged by fire.
29.	13.12.92	Village Hardchanam, Panzalla, Baramulla District	1 temple was damaged by fire.
30.	14.12.92	Chatru, Doda District	2 temples were damaged by fire.
31.	-do-	Tehsil Doda	1 temple was damaged by fire.
			Total : 44
			Additional cases reported to B.G. Verghese by Governor of J & K on December 29, 1992: 8
			Sum Total : 52

asked for a list with details. It never materialised.

However, armed with the two lists in my possession I made such inquiries as I could from the State Government and other sources. The Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir Province conducted an inquiry through the Deputy Commissioners of Anantnag, Baramulla and Srinagar districts who reported that the information was incorrect and that the temples mentioned had not been destroyed or suffered any serious damage. The Tehsildar of Srinagar made a survey of the listed temples in the city and interviewed the pujaris. Only the Sheetalnath Mandir, Habbakadal, was found to have suffered "partial damage" on November 13, 1990 "due to fire".

Basing myself on these findings, I wrote my first article in the *Indian Express* on May 8, 1991. The response of some readers was to denounce this pseudo-secularism and armchair intellectualism since I had not seen the structures myself in person.

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I was soon able to do so. I visited Srinagar and personally went to some shrines in the company of a fellow journalist and an official guide. We spoke to the pujaris and worshippers and heard absolutely no complaint from them. Two among the most famous and revered temples in Kashmir, Ganpatyar (described in the RSS list as "demolished") and

(Continued on page 33)

Of Mice, Men and Violence

LANCY LOBO

A well-known Gujarati daily from Surat, *Gujarat Mitra*, on January 10 carried a photograph of a hawker belonging to a particular community standing next to his handcart on a crowded pavement selling his wares to two women of the same community. The caption read: "Reckless population explosion has deprived the pedestrians their pavements". The insinuation was clear: eliminate them! It is an open secret that most of the regional or vernacular press has been indulging in communal propaganda. Except for an occasional unbiased article to keep up secular appearance, the vernacular press has been wallowing in the mire of communalism and competing with one another to dish out rabid communal fare on their pages. This is not only to increase their circulation but also with the evil design of vitiating the social atmosphere. It is also because the publishers, editors and owners of newspapers are communal themselves.

Many explanations are given for communal riots in this country. It is said that the unemployed youth is actively indulging in riots. It is the virus of the hatred disseminated over the years that is taking its toll. A group desirous of taking control of the state is fomenting riots by controlling culture and religion. There is also an argument used by the fascists which basically springs from socio-biology. communal riots in the country are also a programme for mutual elimination. Generally the dominant section of the majority or community subjugates the minority. Both suffer losses but invariably the minority community suffers more.

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IT cannot be ignored that crowding gives rise to danger signals. Physical environment determines social patterns. Social patterns in a crowded slum and in a spacious housing society are quite different. Space is an important variable that controls human social behaviour. Slum people are seen to be quarrelsome, picking up fights on flimsy grounds. Those who live in housing societies appear to be more peace-loving. It is also a fact that most of the riots take place in cities and within cities they erupt more usually in the crowded areas.

Dr Lobo belongs to Centre for Social Studies, South Gujarat University, Surat.

The phenomenon of crowding occurs when organisms are brought together in such a manner and numbers as to produce physical reactions of stress. Important among these reactions is the stepping up activity of adrenalin glands. Whenever these reactions to stress are widespread and persistent, they are followed by physical weakening, sometimes rage and violence or extreme passivity, a rise in sexual aberrations and breakdown of orderly group behaviour. What follows immediately is waves of death and destruction until the population is no longer crowded.

Ethologists and primatologists who study group behaviour have been cautious about projecting their findings on man. Yet there is something of an animal in man. A number of experiments with animals by the above mentioned scientists has shown that crowding leads to physical termination so as to create greater space for the surviving, or in view of the surviving. The experiments with rats is now well-known. Rats were placed in pens and their behaviour observed. In pens meant for 10 rats, 50 rats were placed and the consequence was chaos, violence, physical stress and death. The scientists have also studied motherhood in pens. They have found that motherhood in crowded pens shows a marked difference in behaviour. It breaks down. Edward Hall, an anthropologist, emphasised the critical importance of architecture, in avoiding stress of urban crowding. Architectural needs vary from culture to culture. Space and violence have been connected by psychologists too. *Lebensraum* (living space) was the slogan of the Nazis invading neighbouring countries.

The "ethinic cleansing" that we hear about in Christian Yugoslavia, the tribal warfares in Muslim Somalia, and the communal riots in Hindu India appear to be exercises in physical elimination of certain populations in order to create space for certain segments of the dominant or majority communities. This space is not just physical but economic and political. The abuse of religion comes handy for legitimising the quest for space. In other places region, language, ethnicity are also used for the same purpose. The behaviour of certain sections of people in these countries, the brutality, bestiality and gruesomeness of violence testify to the animal in man. The behaviour of rats in the pens is not significantly different from that of men in crowded cities and slums especially during riots.

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SURAT has a population of 18 lakhs. Surat's population has doubled in the last decade. Surat has traditional as well as modern industries. The art-silk and embroidery industries are old but their progress during the last few decades has been phenomenal. The city has nearly half of the total powerlooms in the country for art-silk. The textile industry is a major industry which provides employment to a very large populace in the city. The number of powerlooms has increased three times (from 19,025 to 53,254) between 1970 and 1981. There are also a large number of 'unauthorised' and 'unregistered' powerlooms. More than three lakh workers are employed in powerlooms. The powerlooms largely function with family labour. According to a survey carried out by the South Gujarat University in 1984 more than 90 per cent of the workers employed in the powerlooms industry are migrants and live in slums.

Diamond cutting began in Surat in the sixties. It is the second major industry employing hundreds of people. There were more than 56,000 units with 3,73,306 workers between 1982-84. Most of these workers are migrants and many commute from nearby villages everyday. The city also has other modern industries such as chemical, plastic, engineering and cement.

The growth of Surat has given rise to an acute shortage of housing facilities. Housing shortage is so acute that it is a dream for the workers in the organised sector to build even 10 feet by 10 feet pucca houses in the city. The number of persons per household is highest (around 5.81) as compared to Ahmedabad and Baroda. Approximately 50 per cent of dwelling houses in the city are one-room tenements. More than 35 per cent of the total population of Surat lives in 300 and odd slum pockets.

Surat has no recent history of riots. The last riot took place in 1927. The city has expanded and possibly reached a saturation point, whereby civic amenities such as water, electricity, drainage, roads, and health care cannot cope with the increased demands. There has been incresing informalisation of the formal sectors. Capital is completely dominating labour. Twelve hours of duty, piece-rate wages, postponed wages and absence of labour unions have pauperised labour. Frustration has been building up at a rapid pace.

The riots that followed the demolition of the Babri Masjid have been brutal, gruesome and bestial. People have been burnt alive, women and young girls have been gang raped and such scenes have been video-taped. The depth of decadence and dehumanisation has never been so high in this city. It has overtaken Ahmedabad and Baroda which have a chronic history of brutality and communal riots. The riots in Surat have not been spontaneous outbursts but carefully planned ones. It is this planning that makes us forward the argument from socio-biology...a plan to subjugate and exterminate people. The caption and the photograph mentioned earlier merely reinforce our hunch. Nearly two lakh workers mostly from the textile sector have fled Surat to their native villages in Orissa and UP.

Population control is a national problem. Not only has longevity increased but children who otherwise would have died are living on account of the life saving drugs distributed through primary health centres and voluntary organisations. The poor produce more children hoping some would survive. Nature had a way of maintaining homeostasis in population and resources through regular visitations of plagues, famines and diseases. Technology has been able to handle such calamities. As a result the population has been on the rise and a situation is created whereby people are fighting for the limited resources. This fight manifests in so many ways...exploitation, injustice, gap between the rich and poor, and finally conflict situations. The compaign and mobilisation by fundamentalist and communalist political parties provide further fuel in precipitating these polarised populations.

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IN India the traditional upper classes have also been upper castes. After independence because of institutional changes such as the egalitarian Constitution, just legal system and elimination of hierarchies, the vested interests of the upper strata have been in jeopardy. The available cake has been forced to be shared, at least theoretically, with the lower castes and classes. This has created a lot of resentment among the upper castes. They are now hitting back. They have had a carefully laid out strategy. They have identified in Muslims a common mythic foe which was necessary to mobilise the wider Hindu community. In a hierarchical society religion was the best bet to mobilise people.

The upper castes are numerically the same as the Muslims, namely, 12 per cent each of the total population in India. The upper castes consider themselves to be real Hindus, controlling Hindu cultural and religious ideology. The threat to their position from the lower stratum of the Hindu society has been nullifed by imposing their hegemony (cultural) on the lower stratum. The upper castes, except the Kshatriyas, have no experience in fighting. In general the upper castes have always used lower castes, largely dependent on them, for fighting their battles. It is reported that in the Surat riots, some of the gruesome and heinous acts perpetrated were carried out by people belonging to lower castes. The upper castes act as puppeteers pulling strings behind the curtain. They rarely get down to the streets to fight.

The real or imaginary threat for the upper castes comes from the Muslims. The latter are said to breed faster than the former. Though it is illogical to believe that Muslims numbering 12 per cent will overtake the 80 per cent Hindus in this country, the real fear is the equation between upper caste Hindus and Muslims.

The Hindu Rightist organisations—the RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal—and parties like the BJP have membership largely from the upper castes and middle classes. Ayodhya is an effort on the part of the *Sangh Parivar* to reclaim their deteriorating position after independence. The *Sangh Parivar* is uniting Hindus to subjugate Muslims. The day is not far off when it would enslave its own poor, namely, the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. That is the ultimate end of the logic of socio-biology. It is already reported that the Scheduled Castes in the BJP-ruled States have the highest amount of atrocities against them. So *Hindutva* has little or no package for the lower stratum.

This raises several questions about the role of religion. Should religion be used as a legitimising force to perpetuate exclusion, inequality, injustice and hierarchy or should it be a force to condemn such evils? Real and authentic religious values will never subscribe to the argument of socio-biology. On the contrary, they advocate for equity, sharing and concern for fellow organisms, in our case, human beings. The countries that have pursued the argument of socio-biology are on the brink of ruin, economic as well as political. Real economic development has been stalled on account of communal, sectarian, ethnic and racial riots in these countries. ■

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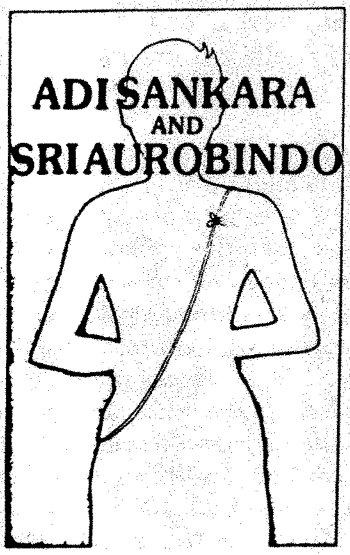

V. Narayan Karan Reddy

Adi Sankara and Sri Aurobindo, though born in India at different times, belonged to the entire universe. Both were thinkers *par excellence*. Both talked of the Spiritual Man and the Superman. But Sankara showed the path of liberation and Aurobindo that of transformation and total change. Sankara's exposition of the nature of ultimate reality confirms in us the belief that man is in essence spirit and it is forgetting this truth that leads to different sorts of miseries. On the contrary, Aurobindo argued out a case in favour of collectivity, progress and perfection on the one hand and existence of the supra-rational awareness or consciousness on the other.

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Change in Financial Year

ARUN. K. DESAI

In its endeavour to globalise the Indian economy the Narsimha Rao Government has initiated a series of reforms and, as it claims, a host of others are to follow suit in due course of time.

As such nothing would be more apt, timely and befitting as also in line with its ongoing measure, if it, without further delay, makes the necessary change in the 'financial year' of the country which is long overdue.

As a matter of fact, the question of *change* in the financial year, as the government record reveals, has been more than a century old and has kept on surfacing time and again just to be sidelined, either for want of political will or lack of economic perception on the part of the rulers and bureaucrats over the years, or perhaps on account of both put together.

The advocacy for the 'change' has been on a rationally strong ground which envisages not only dire need but rather urgency for it so as to ensure the presentation of a more comprehensive and realistic annual budget year after year. After all, a budget is not just a piece of statement of estimated receipts and expenditure but an economic tool for achieving the objectives of the government.

One cannot the sight of the fact that despite growing industrialisation at a faster pace, India is still a predominantly agricultural country and the south-west monsoon has a tremendous bearing on the Indian economy in terms of the size of the kharif crop, outlays necessitated by the floods and droughts and pressure on the price level. This conspicuous explicity alone should have won over the objections/apprehensions hands down.

It is in this backdrop that a glance at our earlier budgets would convince that they were totally bereft of the south-west monsoon assessment or its overall impact and thus more often than not resulted in either taking toll of the planned developmental work in progress or in overplaying the resources as a ritual.

However, it would be interesting to note that when the 'changeover' looked a distant probability, the government machinery which is notoriously allergic to mobility and remains engaged in offering excuses, with a touch of solemnity of course, and enjoys playing a negative role did not act even a shade different in this regard too.

The outbreak of World War I came a handy excuse and the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Indian Finance and Currency (1908)—that 'from the financial point of view, beginning of the year from April, being inconvenient for the budget, it should be changed over to November or January'—was shelved until 1921, and in 1923 it was finally decided to maintain the status quo in this regard.

The author is a financial journalist based in Pune.

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AFTER independence, in 1954, when the issue of 'change' was brought before the Congress session at Kalyani on the ground that the budget gets prepared without any idea of the ensuing monsoon and also that the budget leaves very little time for the members of the legislature to tour their constituencies, it resulted in suitably adjusting the budget session period to facilitate the members' convenience, needless to mention sidetracking the main issue.

What is still amusing is that in 1958 the recommendation of the Estimates Committee (Second Lok Sabha), to alter the year to commence from October 1, could not come through for the simple reason that the government felt that the time was not 'opportune' for making such a change.

Again, in stark contrast to the recommendation of the Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) in 1966, the National Development Council in 1969, after considering the comparative merits and demerits of the various alternatives in this regard, decided to live with the status quo. Nothing could change this mood until 1980. However, in 1981 most of the States in the country were found to favour the 'change' in the financial year, but nothing seems to have transpired beyond that.

It is worth taking cognisance of the absence of unanimity or, in other words, wide divergence of opinions especially in respect to the month to begin the financial year with, also came in the way of effecting the 'change'. A few States wanted it to

(Continued on page 24)

The Second Exile of Ram

S.S. GILL

Lord Krishna had promised that whenever the cup of evil overflowed, he will be reborn to save humanity from retribution. God offered his own Son for crucifixion to cleanse the world of sin. Yet such is the perversity of man that, as Russell said, he does as much evil as he can and as much good as he must. Consequently, Saviours have to frequently do the scavanging to render the earth at all fit for habitation.

But most onerous is the burden of Prophets: each one of them has to carry his cross around his neck. And did man ever show gratitude to his benefactors? Never. True to his nature, he always bit the hand that fed him. Socrates was jailed and poisoned for lightening the torch of reason. Jesus was nailed to the cross for carrying the world's sins on his shoulders. Mohammed was expelled from Mecca and hounded from pillar to post for trying to liberate his people from the clutches of obscurantism. And Gandhi was made the target of a most violent deed for his toil to purge mankind of the scourge of violence.

Saviours of humanity have indeed been tragic and lonely figures. And the tragedy of Ram is, perhaps, the most poignant of them all. Here was a gentle prince, self-effacing, compassionate and pious. Yet he was banished to remote wilderness for fourteen years due to the wiles of a scheming stepmother. As he returned to Ayodhya after completing his long *vanvas*, vicious tongues started wagging about the chastity of his faithful and long-suffering spouse. Placing public opinion above personal conviction, he exiled her back to the forests. Robbed of the bliss of his wife and children, smitten by remorse, leading a cheerless and lonely life, he yet strove hard to establish the most just and benign rule for the people who had caused him infinite pain.

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BUT the worst was yet to come. After a lapse of three millennia, some of Ram's countrymen suddenly awoke to the value of his name as a *mantra* for achieving temporal power. They donned the mantle of ardent Ram *bhaktas* and resorted to spreading such hatred, violence and destruction that his soul was seared to the core. For centuries his name was used as a salve for the wounded hearts and a solace for the afflicted souls. His votaries did build several shrines in his name, but he preferred the temples they carried within. He always remembered with joy the moment when Hanuman tore open his bosom to show his name inscribed upon his heart.

And now there was all this turmoil and chaos about erecting just one more brick-and-mortar memorial to Ram. Another temple in his name? He could not see the point. After all, there were temples enough in Bharat and yet irreligiosity had become the ruling deity of the people. And how could a Ram temple be erected on the foundations of hate and intolerance? How could the harbingers of destruction be the messengers of *Ram-nam*? How could the breakers of law join him in driving the wheels of *dharma*?

While brooding in agony, Ram recalled the visit of his gretest apostle, Gandhi, to a *shakha* of these pretenders to his legacy. When he saw the pictures of various *avatars* all around him, Gandhi inquired as to why the portrait of Ram was not there. He was told that Ram was too soft and effeminate to become their hero. And now, wondered Ram, what had occasioned this sudden turnaround? What resemblance had he with their *avatar*? Or was it that these hate-spewing hotheads had created another Ram after their own image? Be that as it may, this land of *rishis* and *munis* seemed no longer a fit abode for the likes of Ram.

And with this thought in his heavy heart, Ram went into his second exile, this time driven by his self-proclaimed *bhaktas*. ■

The author, now retired, is a former Secretary of the Union Ministry for Information and Broadcasting.

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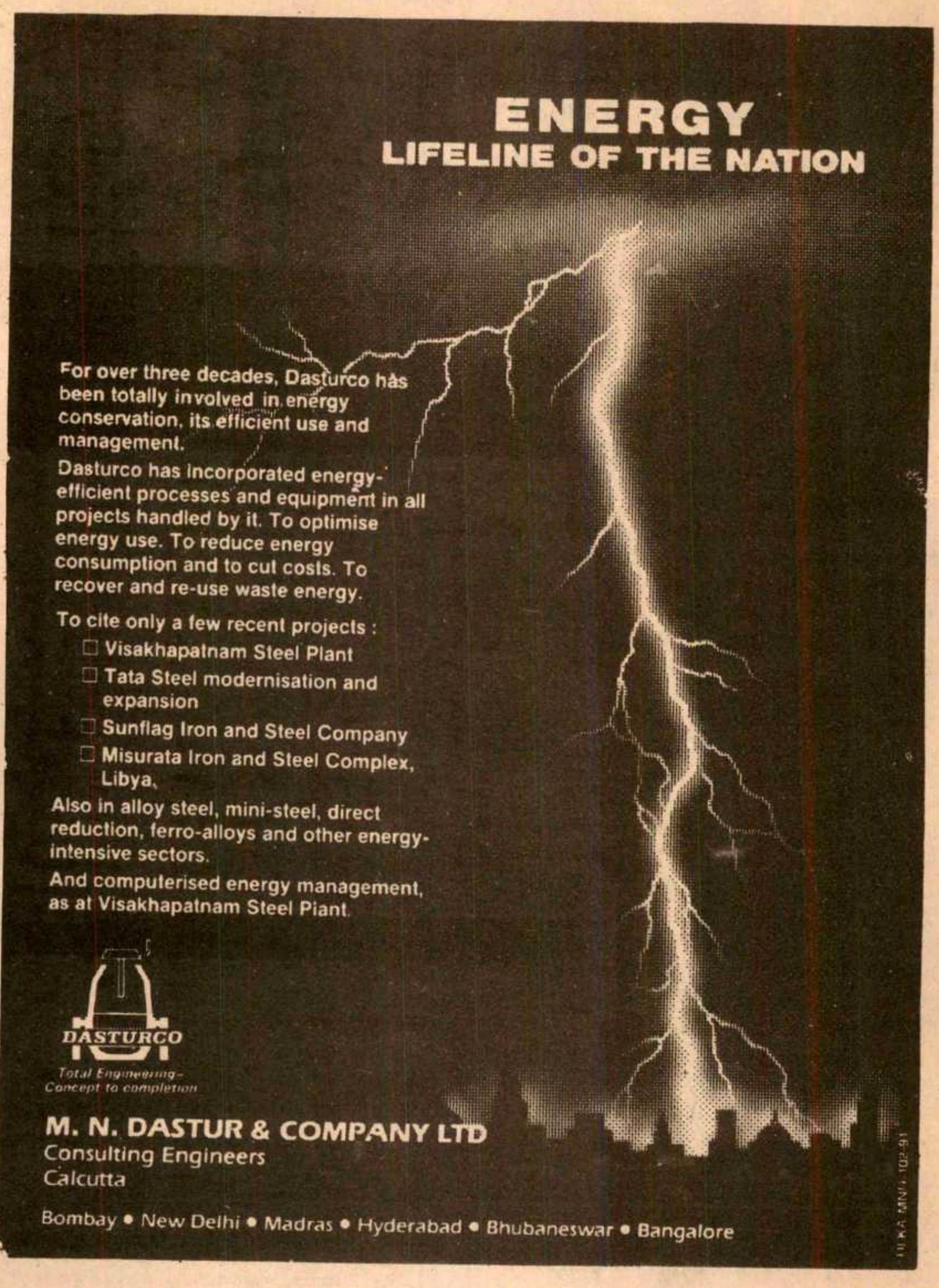

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The Mandal Commission

R.C. DUTT

With the verdict of the Supreme Court validating the 27 per cent reservation in favour of backward castes, notified by the National Front Government, interest has revieved in the recommendation of the Mandal Commisson. There have been protests again, but fortunately they have not taken the violent form they took in 1990. Janata party leaders headed by V.P. Singh have been euphoric about it, and hailed the decision as a substantial step towards social justice. Indeed, anyone criticising the caste basis of the Mandal Commission recommendation has been dubbed as reactionary—seeking to perpetuate the hegemony of the upper castes. Is this criticism legitimate? To what extent are the real interests the large masses of the deprived people of the country served, and to what extent therefore is social justice promoted, by caste-based reservations?

First, it is necessary to understand the significance of the Supreme Court ruling. The Court was called upon to pronounce on the legality of reservations, not on their merits, and it has held reservation of 27 per cent in favour of the backward castes to be legal, because, added to 22.5 per cent reservation for Scheduled Castes and Tribes, the total does not exceed 50 per cent, which, according to the Court, is the maximum permissible limit for reservations. It is on this ground that a further reservation of 10 per cent on the basis of economic criteria has been held *ultra-vires*. The verdict is on the legality of reservations, not on their propriety. This is rightly so because propriety is a matter of socio-political decision with which the courts are not concerned.

There is certainly force in the argument that social justice requires that the castes which have been discriminated against in our society for centuries should now be helped by measures of discrimination in their favour, if necessary, and fully integrated with the rest of the community. The question which arises is whether caste-based reservation is the only, or even the best, way of achieving this purpose. Indeed, it can be questioned whether such reservation can achieve the purpose at all.

The author, a retired member of the Indian Civil Service, is a former Secretary of the Government of India.

An argument advanced in favour of reservations on the basis of castes is that by inducting persons in positions of authority from castes hitherto oppressed, the administration as a whole is made more sympathetic towards them. This is an illusion, not supported by past experience. It is the system that operates against the deprived sections of the population, and those who join it are more likely to be co-opted in it than to rebel against it. Indeed, it was discovered fairly early in our national struggle that Indianisation of the services was no alternative to self-government. Our experience since independence has been no different. There have been numerous Ministers drawn from Scheduled Castes and even tribes, but few can claim to have been of any significant help to them. Atrocities against Harijans are, if anything, more frequent, and even more ruthless, than ever before.

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THE first question that needs to be considered is whether reservation is the best way to deal with the problem of backwardness. It is relevent to recall in this connection what Jawaharlal Nehru wrote about it in his letter to the Chief Ministers (letter dated June 27, 1961, para 25):

> The only real way to help a backward group is to give opportunities of good education; this includes technical education which is becoming more important. Everything else is provision of some kind of crutches which do not add to the strength or health of the body...

He referred to in this connection to "scholarship on a very wide scale at every grade of education to bright boys and girls...". The soundness of this view can hardly be contested. Scholarships which have to be earned provide much better incentives to self-improvement than reservations based on the accident of birth. On the other hand, reservations like crutches become addictions which destroy the incentive to cast off backwardness.

An equally important question is about the criteria of backwardness. The enumeration of Backward Castes in the report of the Mandal Commission has already been questioned, and the Supreme Court has directed fresh enumeration by regional bodies. In the last analysis, when decisions are taken by the government can political influences be eschewed altogether? Some influential land-owning castes figure in the list of Mandal Commission and demands have been made by others to include prominent castes like the Jats. How is it to be ensured that political pressures arising out of competitive populism do not vitiate the official list? Besides, backwardness is not confined to the Hindus. Indeed, Muslims as a religious community are more backward socially and economically than the Hindus; and yet, caste-based reservations take no notice of them. Finally, even among the Hindus the "backward castes" as enumerated run into millions. How can it be ensured that a few thousand posts in the services or seats in educational institutions are not appropriated by what has been referred to as the "creamy layer"?

Merit is, of course, the first casualty in any extensive scheme of reservation, but it has been brushed aside as a matter of little consequence. This is surprising. On the one hand, we are opening up the economy to introduce competition, national and international, in order to attain international standards, and are being asked to bear with the consequent hardships in the form of inflation, retrenchment and loss of employment. On the other hand, we attach little importance to merit which alone can ensure such standards. To quote Jawaharlal Nehru again from the same letter to the Chief Ministers:

> But if we go for reservations on communal and caste basis, we swamp the bright and able people and remain second rate or third rate.... It has amazed me to learn that even promotions are based some time on communal or caste consideration. This way lies not only folly, but disaster. Let us help the backward group by all means, but never at the cost of efficiency. How are we going to build our public sector, or indeed any sector, with second rate people?

The conclusive argument against reservations based on castes, however, is that it is counter-productive. It does not even help the "backward castes". Casteism in our society is a pre-capitalist, feudal relic of a bygone age. It has survived so far because feudal conditions prevailed specially in rural areas until independence. After independence with the development of modern production relations, particularly in urban areas, casteism has begun to languish. It has languished more in urban areas with comparatively longer traditions of industrialisation, as West Bengal, than in other regions. Casteism still exists in a virulent form in rural areas because though feudalism in its undilputed form of *zamindari* has been abolished, inegalitarian land distribution has created strong vested interests which are not reluctant to exploit caste prejudices to their own advantage. Power-hungry politicians, by creating vote-banks out of caste formations, have also aggravated the differences.

◆

THE task, however, in the interests of the backward castes themselves, specially the most backward among them, is to abolish casteism, not to give it a fresh lease of life. But it is exactly the latter that the Mandal Commission recommendations tend to do. By emphasising caste identities in vital matters like education and employment it has not only revived casteism, even in areas where it was slowly dying out, but has created fierce caste antagonisms. We have now the spectacle of the educated youth of the country, who could have been expected to overcome the highly divisive, undemocratic caste prejudices, flying at each others' throats in an attempt to protect their self-interests, as they perceive them. By entwining caste identities with career prospects and, therefore, with narrow self-interests the Mandal Commission has done a great disservice to the country in general, and in particular to the really backward castes who are likely to suffer more than the others in this newly created atmosphere of caste-antagonism.

It is amazing that the great champions of the backward castes could think only of reservations and were blind to the continuing injustice in production relations which have condemned millions of our countrymen, which include most of the really backward castes, to sub-human existence. It would have done these castes, and other sections of the deprived population too, considerable good if the time and energy misspent on reservations had been devoted to sponsor a strong movement to revive the dying interest in land reforms, and thus bring about a more egalitarian distribution of land, and greater stability in land tenures, a task which has been seriously attempted only in West Bengal and Kerala.

Indeed, if the backward communities, who are concentrated in rural areas and overflow to the urban areas in search of relief, are really to be helped one has to go beyond land reforms. It was with this view that Prime Minister Nehru had proposed cooperative farming on a voluntary basis. This could have given millions of landless workers in rural areas and, therefore, millions of men and

(Continued on page 24)

The Muslim and the News

CHARU GUPTA AND M.K.S.

The BJP-VHP-RSS call for *kar seva* at Ayodhya on December 6 and its aftermath have been the highlight of various national mainstream newspapers. During this period one saw various sparks of 'pluralistic', 'secular' and 'fair' reporting. However, as time passed, certain subtle changes came about. Though in comparison to Advani's *rath yatra* in 1990 the newspapers were definitely restrained, there were reflections of communal colouring as well, albeit cleverly done. More important, as the BJP stand became more belligerent and offensive, the shift too became more visible.

Other reasons for this shift are also discernible. The mainstream print media assume to a large extent that their major audience are the Hindu readers and Muslim readers do not form part of the readership, or at least not a part worth catering for. Thus they mould their news to suit the stance of this majority, or what they think is its stance.

There are a large number of stigmas and negative symbols associated with Muslims in popular Hindu consciousness. In fact, the aggressive Hindu nationalism rests upon an irrational and hateful hysteria against the minorities, particularly Muslims.

An analysis of the newspapers after December 6, 1992* reveals that in spite of various examples of good reports, the one thing that stands out clearly from the overall tone of the newspapers is an anti-minority stance. There is almost a continuity in the print media regarding this. Since the days of Advani's *rath yatra*, and even much before that, certain stereotypes regarding the Muslims have remained deeply ingrained in the consciousness of a majority of journalists, reflecting clear biases and prejudices, that is, Muslims are aggressors and zealots, unpatriotic and are being appeased.

The facts, on the other hand, show that

—Muslims cannot outstrip the Hindus numerically in at least 200 years, if ever;

—they are less polygamous than the Hindus (in fact, given the reality of the sex ratio in this country, if all Muslims had four wives, then all Hindus would have been bachelors!);

—communal riots take a greater toll of their lives and property, so they could hardly be excessively militant; and

—if they had really been 'appeased' or favoured, they would surely have prospered faster and more vigorously.

However, ignoring such blatant facts, the majority of the mainstream newspapers continue to be wrapped in myth and misconception. They manufacture, manipulate, shape and suppress news so that it caters to prevalent popular beliefs and reinforces religious stereotypes. With a selective perception, the media act like a searchlight, illuminating some areas while leaving others in darkness.

I

THE image of the Muslim threat to the Hindu society was presented in a headline in *Jansatta*, a leading national Hindi daily (December 13, 1992 p. 2):

> *Ayodhya ki Muslim-bahul bastiyon ke Hinduon mein ab khauf*
> (Fear now among Hindus in the Muslim-dominated areas of Ayodhya)

The myth of Muslim aggression was reinforced in another story in *Navbharat Times* (December 30, 1992, p. 3). The report is from Varanasi and says:

> *...Pichhle Shukravar ko yahan bari sankhiya mein Musalmanon ne namaz ada ki thi...Iski bari tivra pratikriya bahusankhyak janta mein hui thi..Gyanvapi kshetra ek tarah se chhaoni bana hua hai...Koi bhi sabhya nagrik ab in galiyon mein kharidari ke liye jane mein ghabrata hai.*
> (Last Friday a large number of Muslims had offered prayers here. This evoked an immediate reaction from the majority people. The Gyanvapi region has become like a brarrack. Any civilised citizen is now afraid to go into these lanes for shopping.)

There is an explicit assumption in the report that it is the Muslim action alone that leads to a Hindu reaction.

Another report in *Jansatta* (December 30, p.1) was more strident:

> *...Phir jumme ke roz Gyanvapi masjid mein [illegible] parhne ko atur koi paanch hazaar Musalmanon ke [illegible] se is dharmik shehar ki hava mein tanav ho gaya hai.*

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*Delhi editions of various newspapers have been taken for this study.

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> *Jiski pratikriya mein Saumvaar ko koi ek laakh logon ne Vishwanath ka darshan kiya...Khas baat yeh thi ki itni bari bhir bina kisi appeal ya sanagathan ke thi.*
> (Then on the day of *jumma* 5000 Muslims had gathered to offer prayers in the Gyanvapi Masjid, leading to tension in the air of this religious city. As a reaction to it, around one lakh paid homage to Vishwanath on Monday... It is important to note that such large crowds gathered without any appeal or organisation.)

These prejudices and negative perceptions went a step further with the reporting of communal tensions in Bangladesh and Pakistan. Alongside one noticed that by December 8 and 9, the BJP started justifying its misdeeds by quoting the destruction of temples in these countries. The print media played their part, not only by displaying the news prominently but also by giving it provocative headings.

For example, there was a prominent news on the first page of *The Times of India* (December 8) titled: "Temples burnt in UK, Pak, Bangladesh".

Punjab Kesari, a Hindi daily (December 9, 1992, p.3), had a box news titled:

> *Paak mein mandiron aur Hindi video casseton par hamle*
> (Attacks in Pak on temples on Hindi video cassettes)

On December 10, the tone became more frenzied in the paper. On p. 4 there were two news items on the same. Further, specific names of temples were mentioned like Dhakeshwari temple and Jagannath temple, etc. having been destroyed in Bangladesh.

The cake, however, was taken by *Indian Express* (December 9), which in its front page in a big box item had a picture of a temple falling and the caption stated: "Pakistanis watch a Hindu temple in Lahore crumble after demonstrations attack it with crowbars and swords."

Navbharat Times (December 12, p. 12) also talked about how after so many days temples continued to be destroyed in Bangladesh. *The Times of India* (December 12) had a report of temple destruction on the first page, but when intellectuals opposed it in Bangladesh and talked of restoration of temples, the news was relegated to p.9. Again the same paper (December 21, p.1) had a second lead story which referred to the demolition of more than 60 temples in Pakistan in a ruling party sponsored carnage.

Though it is true that the destruction of all religious sites has to be condemned, one cannot equate the destruction of religious sites during riots and the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The demolition was not just another act of vandalism by a mob out of control, but was part of a sustained campaign.

The news stories tended to reinforce the image of every Muslim as an enemy. These news items, the way they were written and presented also conformed to the BJP agenda of cowardly rationalisation to overcome the guilt and discomfort most people felt immediately after the Babri Masjid was destroyed. In contrast, the fact that the BJP/RSS/VHP combine themselves had destroyed the *Ram Chabootra* and the *Sita-Ram Rasoi* alongwith the Babri Masjid was largely ignored by almost all newspapers.

There also seems to be an unwritten rule that when temples are destroyed they remain 'temples' but when Masjids are destroyed, they become 'disputed structures' or remain merely 'religious places'. *The Times of India* (December 11, p.1), while talking of riots in Haryana, says:

> ...One particular place of worship bore the brunt of the attack and all of its 14 idols were broken or defiled. Idols were covered by a thick coat of soot, and lay strewn about in pieces...They drove away 80 cows and burnt alive one.

Clearly the fingers are pointed at a Muslim mob which came and destroyed the temple (as there are no idols in a Masjid) and even killed the 'holy' cow.

This kind of 'media blindness' ignoring contrary evidence suggests that there is an unconscious belief that the majority of its readers would not question items which could give an unfavourable impression regarding Muslims or which could be used to reinforce stereotypes. Thus events that tend to conform to the expectation stand a better chance of making news than those that do not.

II

THE bias is not restricted to structures but extends to people as well. Thus many-a-time when a Hindu is killed in a riot, he/she acquires a specific identity and name but Muslims always remain unnamed, faceless, nameless. Inversely, when one talks of aggressors, the proposal is reversed. Then Hindus become nameless and Muslims acquire a distinct face.

Especially in the case of riots one sees a close resemblance between the newsmen's anticipations of what the events would be like, and what actually happened. A particular news framework is established and the riot is covered accordingly. The story is readily slotted into a framework which is reassuringly familiar to both the journalist and the reader.

Reporting, especially in the case of riots, is not simply a matter of collecting facts. Facts do not exist in isolation but are located within wide-ranging sets of assumptions, and which facts are thought to be relevant to a story depend on which set of assumptions are held. It stands to reason that journalists seeking to meet their deadlines must have a set of preconceptions of what is related to what. If both the journalists and a majority of the readers associate Muslims with the threat, then reporters and editors, pressured by deadlines and constrained by the limited amount of space available, may simply treat the news about riots in a way which conforms to this definition. In other words, what they are doing is to present the news which is unfamiliar by virtue of just having happened, in as familiar and easily digestible a fashion as possible. This leads to an obvious distortion.

Another problem in dealing with reports on riots is that there is a tendency to neglect the background material. Riots are likely to appear as sudden and unexplained or as having only direct and immediate causes. The underlying state of affairs is largely absent and easy assumptions, instinctive associations, stereotype models are upheld.

This time too while reporting riots this was the dominant trend. As a specific case study, the reports on riots in Seelampur in Delhi have been examined in detail as one has some information regarding what actually happened there (thanks to reports by the Sampradayikta Virodhi Aandolan, PUCL, etc.). Even a cursory glance reveals that the news reports were largely based on police sources and there was an unquestioning acceptance of communal stereotypes regardless of actual evidence. The victims of the systematic carnage were invariably presented as the perpetrators of the crime.

The communal violence in Seelampur took an extremely ugly turn on December 11, 1992. Most of the national dailies (Delhi editions) made this their headline the next day. All the newspapers showed a tendency to accept the version of the authorities without corroborating evidence. Regarding the question as to who instigated the riots, the fingers were to a large extent pointed towards the minority community.

All reports of December 12 tell of a mob snatching a stengun from a policeman and stabbing him. In a way this incident is supposed to explain the police action in Seelampur.

The Times of India (p.1):

> Trouble erupted around 10.20 last night, when a crowd from the Seelampur side of a small bridge on the Jaffarabad train attacked a police picket, knifed two policemen and began dragging one of them into the Welcome Colony inside. The policeman, constable Avadh Narain, was then rescued. Knifed in six places, his condition is reported to be serious.

Indian Express (p.1):

> In retaliation, some unidentified persons attacked a police picket at Jaffarabad pulia...Later the missing cop, Awadh Narain, was found lying near C-Block, Welcome Colony with stab wounds on his head, chest and back.

However, both the stories fail to look at the background material in which they should have discussed the unprovoked attack on the Mustafa Masjid by the mob. The *Indian Express* report further stated in the end (December 12, p.9):

> The police top-brass maintained that it was the former community (meaning Muslims, on the basis of the whole report) which had instigated the riots.

Worst still is *Navbharat Times* on the same day (p.1):

> ...*Welcome ke kuch log 'Pakistan Zindabaad' aur 'Hindustan Muradabaad' ke nare lagane lage. Kuch logon ne virodh kiya to hangama shuru ho gaya.* (Some people of Welcome started shouting slogans like *'Pakistan Zindabaad'* and *'Hindustan Murdabaad'*. When some people opposed this, trouble started.)

At another place the same report says:

> *Police ne dangaiyon* (implying Muslims) *ke kabze se saat katte aur chakuon se bhara ek thaila, ek talwar baramad ki. Ayukt ke mutabik sub kuch purva niyojit tha.*
>
> (Police recovered seven country made pistols and a bag full of knives from the rioters. According to the Commissioner, everything was preplanned.)

All the reports have totally ignored the contrary evidence. Thus the media adhered to a readymade framework in which Muslims appeared to be automatically identified with 'aggresiveness', 'threat' or 'conflict'.

The report in *Indian Express* (December 14, p.5) is an extremely damaging one. In a block, it narrates as to how the riots spread in the Capital.

How the Riots spread in the Capital

Dec. 6	Tension builds up around Jama Masjid as thousands throng to hear Shahi Imam at 5 pm, armed police moves in, starts patrolling by late evening.
Dec. 7	Riots break out in walled city as the curfew is clamped in the morning, followed by violence in Jaffarabad (North-East Delhi) leading to 3 deaths. Curfew clamped here immediately in the afternoon.
Dec. 10	A cop is stabbed and fresh incidents of violence start in North-East, covering Welcome police station. Several places of worship set afire.
Dec. 11	Violence flares up again as people prefer to go for Friday prayers, 10 killed in Welcome, Janata Colony, and adjoining areas. Pitched battle continues the whole day.
Dec. 12	Walled city and part of trans-Yamuna areas still under curfew. Curfew relaxed in the old city but not in areas across the river.

It is amazing that not even a passing reference is made to the destruction of the Babri Masjid in the whole report as a reason and cause for the spread of violence. In fact, it clearly points the finger at Muslims as instigators of riots in Delhi. While talking of violence in north-east Delhi, the same report says:

> The situation went from bad to worse, despite curfew and other measures, in an area where thousands of illegal Bangladesh migrants settled. Mr Kaushal (Police Commissioner) has attributed this to the fact that most of the residents in this area are essentially daily wagers, and in the absence of any other preoccupation they are more inclined to violence than those from the 'same community' in the walled city.

The report is highly motivated. It maintains clearly that the threat perceived by the Hindu majority is implicit in Muslim immigration and their presence. The report further neglects the extent of discrimination and disadvantage suffered by Muslims except insofar as these very conditions seem to contribute towards the supposed threat, for example, by fostering anti-social behaviour.

Navbharat Times (December 16, p. 12) has a report entitled:

> *'Purvi Dilli ka danga purva niyojit?'*
> (Riots in east Delhi preplanned?)

The report stated:

> *..Police sutron ke anusaar dange ke baad Welcome Colony se giraftaar kiye gaye logon mein se saat Pakistani nagrik hain. Police ne bataya ki inhi logon nein sthaniya logon ko dange ke liye uksaya. Dange bharakne ka mukhya kaaran bhi yahi raha...Dange ki shuruaat 'Pakistan Zindabaad' aur 'Hindustaan Murdabaad' ke nare se hui...Police ka kahena hai ki police pickets par hamla karnewali bhir bhi 'Pakistan Zindabaad' ke nare laga rahi thi. Inhi logon ne baad mein vibhin makanon par 'position' lekar suniyojit dhang se golibari ki.*
> (According the police sources, out of the people arrested from Welcome Colony after the riots, seven are Pakistani citizens. Police said that these people only provoked the local people for riots. This was also the main reason for the outbreak of riots. The riot started with the slogan *'Pakistan Zindabaad'* and *'Hindustan Murdabaad'*. Police say that the mob that attacked police pickets was also raising the slogan of *'Pakistan Zindabaad'*. The same people later on took position in different houses and fired in an orgnised manner.)

The report is totally false and planted. The claim is contradicted by the police records themselves. Almost all the arrests are of local Muslims of Welcome and Janata Colonies. If indeed the Muslims of the locality were so well-armed, as the report says, surely there would have been more casualties among the police and the Hindus. On the contrary, almost all those injured and killed as well as those arrested are Muslims.

While almost all people of Seelampur referred to the communal role played by the DCP of north-east, Deepak Mishra, when he was transferred to West Delhi, the newspapers viewed him extremely sympathetically.

Jansatta (December 17, p.3) states:

> *...Police ayukt ne dange ke samay zilla police ki karvahi ko thik bataya...Unhone kaha ki dange mein dono samudayon ke log mare gaye hain...Unki vyaktigat rai mein Sri Mishra ek 'behtarin aur imandaar' afsar hain.*
> (The Police Commissioner stated that the action of district police at the time of riots was correct. He said that people of both communities had been killed during the riots. In his personal opinion, Mr Mishra is a fine and honest officer.)

Navbharat Times, same date (p.1), says:

> *...Uttar purvi Dilli ke police ayukt Deepak Mishra ka aaj achanak tabadla kar diya gaya...Is sthanantaran se police mehakme mein stabdhata chaa gayi hai...Adhikansh police adhikariyon ne is adesh ko anuchit aur police ka manobal girane wala adesh bataya.*
> (The DCP of north-east Delhi, Deepak Mishra, was suddenly transferred today. This has created a shock wave in the police department. Most of the police officers considered the act incorrect, and bad for the morale of the police force.)

There are many other instances in other riots where Muslims are shown as aggressors. It is cleverly done and amidst a report names of some Muslims are inserted as being arrested for inciting violence. One knows of the holocaust unleashed by the BJP-RSS-VHP-Shiv Sena combine in Ayodhya. However, *Navbharat Times* (December 8, p.1) has a report which says:

> *...Karsevakon ki uttejana ka mukhya kaaran tha, doosre sampradaye dwara karsevakon par goli chala dene se Ajmer ke ek kar sevak ki maut. Is ghatna ki report Ayodhya kotwali mein darj karayi gayi hai, jismen Hazi Mahmood va unke putra ko naamzad kiya gaya hai.*
> (The main reason for the anger of the *kar sevaks* was the death of a *kar sevak* from Ajmer due to firing by the other community. This incident has been reported in the Ayodhya police station and in it Hazi Mahmood and his son have been named.)

Indian Express (December 9, p.1) also specifically refers to the arrest of 400 students of Aligarh Muslim University. Another report of the same newspaper (December 23, p.6), while talking of the Bhopal riots specifically blames Arif Aqil, an independent MLA from north Bhopal, for inciting riots. The report ends with:

> The million-dollar question is: who decided and why that Mr Arif Aqil and others like him should not be taken into custody till half the city was in flames?
> It may be true that this person had a role in riots but then only one person, and that too a Muslim was singled out for blame.

On the other hand when it comes to victims or people killed, they inevitably are Hindus. Specific names are given. Thus *The Times of India* (December 8, p. 2 and 4) names in detail the *kar sevaks* who died, that is, "Rakesh from Gujarat, Vishnu Das Nitan from Maharashtra...and Purushottam Das from MP." Again in the same newspaper (December 9, p.4) there is a news about a priest killed in Allahabad.

Similarly in the *Punjab Kesari* (December 8, p.10), specific names of Hindus have been given, who were injured in riots. *Indian Express* (December

11, p.5), while talking of the Ghaziabad riots, says:

> The situation had turned explosive on Wednesday evening following the murder of two persons including a temple priest on Goshala Road.

The worst, however, is *Indian Express* (December 15, p. 3). It has two reports on that page. The first one is titled 'J-K militants demolish 40 temples, 150 houses'. The report says:

> Kashmiri militants have destroyed at least 40 temples and 150 houses during the past five days...In villages like...entire settlements of minority houses, schools, *dharamshalas* and *ashrams* were reduced to ashes...Several precious idols of antique value were also burnt along with the temples. The house of the eminent Kashmiri poet, Srawanand Premi, at Amnoo in Kulgam was also reduced to ashes.

In the same newspaper, on the same day, same page, there is another report titled 'Fiftyseven massacred in Nellie-type reprisals'. The report is on Assam riots. The reporter supposedly gives extremely vivid details. But in every instance cited, Muslims are shown as the 'aggressors' and 'attackers'. The report contains specific names of a number of 'Hindu victims'. There is an affiliation of the author with the Hindus and the anger against the Muslims, specially migrant Muslims, comes out in its naked form. Some excerpts from the report:

> ...A total of 57 people were massacred in the 23 villages in and around Daboka...Dinabandhu Debnath, a school teacher, who gave a vivid account of the massacre, said, 'It was a Hindustan-Pakistan situation, and the attackers were raising Pakistan slogans'...Alme Khagen Pal (31), hid in a latrine pit as the attackers looted his *paan* vend and surged ahead towards the nearby cluster of houses. 'They were yelling like possessed men, looking for Hindus, they were mad for our blood, because some people we do not know, demolished a mosque at a place we have heard only in grandmother's tales,' he said, weeping and shivering as he recalled how his two brothers were chased through the fields and butchered to death.
>
> Bangshi Das, former Chairman of the Hojai Municipal Board, said, the Bengali-speaking Hindus, most of whom had arrived and settled here during the partition, have been the target of the Muslim immigrants 'who came after 1971'...The Bangladesh Muslims want to grab land by evicting the Hindus,' Dr Das said, adding that there has been a regular and systematic influx of the Muslims from across the border. 'They possess arms and Ayodhya was only an excuse to launch this attack,' he said...The scene was nothing different in Jogijan. Here too the attackers raised slogans in the name of Allah and burnt down houses and butchered every man who came in their way...

Clearly it was a Hindu world conveyed through the majority of reports on riots and Muslims. There was a shrewd combination of facts with fictionalisation. The news and reports were virtually editorialised, with opinions of the writer finding free space. The 'subjectivising' of reports led to a structuring of news in such a way that it upheld existing images, enforcing cultural stereotypes.

The presence of loaded words, phrases and paragraphs gave a definite tilt to the story. In fact rumours, which spread like wildfire among the Hindu community, were given an institutionalised form through these reports. Rumours merged with vivid facts. To the reader it was all 'news'.

There is also an ingrained habit of gathering news and opinion from officials and police, where the version can be equally biased. The importance of the full context and background is thus ignored. The prejudices, predispositions accept unfavourable beliefs about Muslims. They come to be seen as generating conflicts. Thus the anti-Muslim feeling was given an institutionalised framework. ■

(This is a part of a much larger study on Print Media and Communalism after December 6.)

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Rupee-Rouble Accord: A Fair Compromise

PREM SHANKAR JHA

'When nineteen roubles make a rupee, how is it that the Indian Government has decided to settle its debts with Russia at the rate of nineteen rupees to the rouble?'

This question is on the lips of even those who have welcomed every other aspect of the visit of the Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, to India.

The not always unspoken conclusion that many have drawn is that India has once again been forced to accept an unequal agreement with a big power—in this case a former superpower—because of its economic weakness and its military vulnerability or perhaps out of sheer weak-kneedness.

The argument seems plausible because the collapse of India's trade with the former Soviet Union is the main reason why a 13 per cent increase in exports to the general currency areas so far this year has translated into only a five per cent increase in overall exports.

There is also the added constraint of India's urgent need for spares and replacements of Russian defence equipment which form the backbone of India's defence preparedness. But it is also false.

The agreement represents a fair, indeed in many respects generous, compromise which reflects Russia's desire to re-establish, and indeed strengthen the economic relations between the two countries.

The appearance of inequality arises because under the 1978 protocol on rupee trade, the outstanding debt in rupees went up every time the rupee was devalued against the IMF's basket of currencies, but did not go down when the rouble was devalued from 1989 onwards against the same basket.

This imbalance, however, is only apparent.

◆

TO start with, most of this debt is made up of defence credits because long-term economic loans were fully exchange rate-protected and, therefore, aroused no controversy. In the case of defence equipment, the Russians could have taken a narrowly legal position and insisted that India abide by the protocol. Since this spelt out the system for periodically adjusting the rupee-rouble exchange rate without any reference to the rouble-dollar rate, the Indian Government had no legal leg to stand on when it demanded that the latter be brought into the picture.

India could, however, also have claimed in an equally legalistic manner that since the Soviet Union had ceased to exist, all agreements with it were no longer valid except to the extent that the successor states could, under international law, claim contractual obligations.

But that road could lead only to a complete rupture of relations from which neither country would have benefited and the fallout would have been especially severe for India.

The agreement that has now been made represents a fair compromise between these two extreme positions and is, therefore, eloquent testimony to the two countries' desire to maintain and expand relations. But what is more, it is an intrinsically just agreement.

The rouble might well have been overvalued at the time when India received its defence credits, but what most people forget is that there was no such thing as a market price in the Soviet Union at the time when India bought its defence equipment. How then was the price fixed?

The Russian contention has been that Indian defence planners did so bearing in mind the cost in dollars of similar or equivalent equipment, had it been available from the West, and that the prices the Soviet Union had charged were broadly comparable.

This claim is justified. An examination of the prices India paid at the time for import of important equipment such as the MIG aircraft and T-72 tanks shows that they were a good deal cheaper than the equipment they were expected to match in the possession of Pakistan and China.

Of course, the Russian defence equipment were perhaps somewhat more expensive in terms of maintenance and repairs.

Overall, India did not do too badly out of the defence deals, even when one does not take into account the fact that much of the equipment that it got was simply not available from Western sources.

Till 1989, or thereabouts, there was no problem because the rouble's value was not changing in relation to the dollar. The issue of a change in the rupee-rouble rate to match the decline in the value of the rouble only arose after the latter began to be devalued in relation to the dollar.

In mid-1990, when V.P. Singh paid an official visit to the Soviet Union, it was down, officially, to 16 roubles to the dollar and unofficially to 23 roubles or more. But that visit had itself become necessary because the Soviet Union had devalued the rouble only for foreign trade in convertible currencies.

Under the existing bilateral trade agreements, rupee sales did not earn the selling enterprises the vast number of roubles that selling to Europe or Japan did, for instance. Most Soviet enterprises had, therefore, stopped honouring their commitments to India, including commitments to supply defence spares.

The flip side of this coin was that India too was not being asked to pay more in rupees as the price in roubles for Russian exports soared, but only had to pay the old rouble prices, which were broadly comparable to those which were being paid by the Soviet armed forces, or a little higher.

So the Soviet, and later Russian, demand that as India's rupee went down, the rupee-rouble rate should be revised upwards, was not wholly unjustified. The trouble was that even while the Soviet Union still existed, Indian imports were having to be literally forced out of unwilling suppliers and trade, as well as the supply of defence spares was slowly but surely drying up. When the Soviet Union disintegrated, this trade dried up completely.

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THE agreement signed last week represents a fair bargain for India. In defence of the Indian desire that the drop in the value of the rouble should be taken into account, 37 per cent of the total debt amounting to Rs 11,734 crores, has been rescheduled and now has to be paid back in 45 years at without any interest being paid on the sum. The long pay-back period, and the absence of interest means, in effect, that 78 per cent of this loan is an outright grant and that India will be paying back, in real terms, only 22 per cent or Rs 2400 crores at present-day prices.

If the lack of any exchange rate protection for Russia within a three per cent annual devaluation of the rupee is also taken into account, the grant element in the rescheduled debt goes up to over 80 per cent.

Apart from the fact that it removes the last hurdle to the resumption of full-scale economic and trade relations between India and Russia, there are two advantages to settling the debt issue: First, the remaining Rs 19,600 crores is to be settled in terms of Indian exports, mainly of consumer goods. In the old days, when this often meant only that Indian exporters bought almost-finished products in dollars and sold them with a 35 per-cent mark up in the Soviet Union, it was in reality a drain on our foreign exchange resources rather than an earner.

But today, when all current and future trade will be dollar denominated, it offers Indian exporters an invaluable chance to get their brand names known in the Soviet Union, to learn what Russian consumers want, and to establish secure niches in a potentially huge market for consumer goods.

Secondly, the future of Indo-Russian economic relations does not lie in trade so much as in joint production and investment to exploit each other's and Western markets. Russia remains a superb reservoir of engineering talent and technology, but under its autarchic system, its enterprises have little or no knowledge of how to operate in a market-led global economy. Indian entrepreneurs have the capacity not only to fully absorb Russian technology, but also to fine-tune production and sales to meet the demands of the market. At their present exchange rates vis-a-vis the OECD currencies, there is a huge export market waiting for the two countries to tap jointly. That is the direction in which efforts must now turn. ■

(Courtesy: *Observer of Business and Politics*)

Two Visits

HARISH CHANDOLA

Private assurances apart, the public statements made by the two visiting heads of government, John Major of Britain and Boris Yeltsin of the Russian Federation, were extremely favourable to India.

On Kashmir, Prime Minister John Major supported bilateral negotiations between India and Pakistan, and condemned infiltration and smuggling of arms into India and support to terrorism in it.

Without naming Pakistan, he blamed it for most of these activities, and indirectly endorsed the Indian Government's position that a good deal of the trouble in Kashmir and even in Punjab was abetted by and engineered in the neighbouring country.

The Russian President, Boris Yeltsin's statments went still further, surprising many. He said he fully supported Indian unity and integrity and Delhi's position on Kashmir.

He announced that the Russian Federation would not sell military hardware to Pakistan.

He reiterated that his country would sell the promised three cryogenic engines to India and also the technology to produce them.

Russian oil supplies to India, dislocated last year, would be resumed.

He offered joint ventures to Indian companies in Russia and promised similar Russian effort in India. Indian companies would be free to repatriate their profits home from the sale of products they made in Russia and exported to other countries.

There was also the agreement on rupee-rubble rate. Just before Yeltsin came, his first Deputy Prime Minister, Vladimir Shumeiko, had spent five long days in Delhi trying to settle the quantum of Indian debt to the Soviet Union, by coming to an agreement on the rupee-rubble ratio. He failed and went home.

Then came Yeltsin, bringing with him an acceptable formula and putting a seal of approval on it of the two heads of government.

He went to great lengths to explain why his country had faltered in supplying oil to India last year. He said both production and refining of it had run into problems in his country. Then, the embargo on Iraq had caused some other difficulties. These would all be overcome this year and supplies resumed to India.

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PRIVATELY, Yeltsin thought the Russian Federation may in the coming years run into difficulties in its relations with the Central Asian Republics. There, the people in their attempt to rediscover their identity, were seeking it in Islam, and by trying to distance themselves from the Russian people.

Hostility towards the Russian Federation was being generated and there was much loose talk there of the Russians exploiting them economically and politically.

This attempt in Central Asia to generate animosity towards the Russians, some of it fostered from abroad, could create problems for Moscow.

In such a situation, the Russian Federation's friendship with India would stand it in good stead. Moscow need to safeguard its eastern and southern flanks, if it ran into trouble in Central Asia.

The Central Asian Republics were all friends of India, and so Delhi would be able to play a role in resolving problems that might crop up between them and the Russian Federation.

Some people thought Moscow's return to safeguard its old strong links with Delhi, might have come about as a result of the collapse of russian hopes of the West coming to its assistance generously during its present period of transition. Having obtained practically nothing from the West, some observers believed that Russia must have come to the conclusion that it must not abandon its old, stable market in India, and allow its friendship with Delhi to languish.

It would be uncharitable to think that Yeltsin came to India on the rebound. Among his people there exists an ocean of goodwill for India.

I recall my travels in the Russian Federation in July last year, during which several Russians spoke of their worry over the prospect of the West dominating them with its assitance. Some of them, in their talk, had compared India to the cradle and the United States to the coffin, and were wondering about their progression. ■

ARUN DESAI : Change in Financial Year

(Continued from page 10)

start from July, some others from October whereas yet others wanted it to begin from November and the rest preferred the status quo. Alongside, other objections/apprehensions like the 'change' would not only have an adverse impact on the 'working season' but it may also entail drastic modifications in tax laws, rates and procedures kept on dragging the issue.

We must realise that there indeed exists no rationale in dawdling the issue for an infinite length of time which has undoubtedly been illserving while portraying a near precise economic account of the nation on the domestic as well as the international canvas.

Fortunately, the L.K. Jha Committee which was constituted in 1984 to go into the question of 'change' in the financial year, has taken full account of the previous studies made by those who had examined this subject in the past. It reassessed the relevant weights of different factors in the circumstances now prevailing and had submitted its report to the then Finance Minister, V.P. Singh, in April 1985.

The Committee had concluded that the financial year from January to December would be most advantageous and ideal. The budget in that case would have to be tabled in the month of November by which time the size of the kharif crop would be known. Besides, by then, the preview of the rabi crop, because of the moisture content in the soil, would also be possible. The choice of 'changeover' to this particular year cycle would also be helpful in the compilation of statistical data for purposes of National Accounts, in line with the international practice.

As regards apprehension in respect of the 'working season', the Jha Committee found that presently the working season in the country is subjected to two interruptions, firstly, between April and June, on account of the hiatus created by the absence of expenditure authorisations which do not reach the executive agencies in the field until three months after the beginning of the financial year; and secondly, on account of the south-west monsoon slowing down or even suspending many construction activities between July and September. The Committee therefore recommended that appropriate changes in the budgetary and departmental practices be made to eliminate the first interruption. Consequently, the working season would be enhanced by another three months.

As regards tax laws, the Committee ensured that so far as the administration of the tax laws is concerned no special problems are envisaged in the event of a change in the financial year and in the transitional period problems, if any, could be solved by suitable changes in the Act and the Rules made thereunder.

The Committee felt it preferable to define the 'financial year' in the Constitution itself through an amendment of Article 366; the amendment would have to provide for the transitional phase also, besides conferring power on the President to adapt various existing laws.

Interestingly, countries like Canada, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the USA have changed their financial year in the last few decades and the transition was absolutely smooth.

Are we awaiting yet another committee to trigger a spate of controversies to bury the issue once and for all? If not, then why this inordinate delay in effecting it? ■

R.C. DUTT : Mandal Commission

(Continued from page 14)

women of the backward castes, a status in the production set-up for agriculture on which seventy per cent of our population still depend. Cooperative farming was no "socialist" fancy of Jawaharlal Nehru; even Mahatma Gandhi, who did not claim to be a socialist, had stated:

> I firmly believe that we shall not derive the full benefits of agriculture until we take to cooperative farming. Does it not stand to reason that it is far better for a hundred families in a vilalge to cultivate their lands collectively and divide the income therefrom than to divide the land anyhow into a hundred portions?

And yet, the Nagpur Congress Resolution of 1959 favouring cooperative farming on a voluntary basis was strongly opposed by vested interests and allowed to lapse. Will those who profess great sympathy for the backward castes revive and implement this Resolution which will benefit a much larger number among them than reservations can do?

The communal divide fanned by the so-called *Sangh Parivar* brought us the ignominy of December 6, 1992. Let not caste divisiveness complete the picture and shatter the dream of an integrated India, committed to secularism, socialism and to scientific temper. ■

YELTSIN VISIT

Victory for India Lobby in Moscow

SUMIT CHAKRAVARTTY

The success of Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin's first visit to India as the Russian President has unfolded a new chapter in Indo-Russian relations. In fact any close observer of the developments affecting these ties would have no hesitation in frankly admitting that the results of the visit were beyond the expectations of the most ardent advocate of close friendship and interaction between the two states. How did this happen?

Since the abortive coup of August 1991 India continued to occupy—for a sizeable length of time—a low priority in the calculations of the Yeltsin administration (which seized the centre-stage in the wake of the neo-Stalinist apparatchiks' failure to cling on to power as a consequence of the remarkable mass revolt against the attempt to reverse the process of democratisation in the erstwhile USSR). Even before the formal disintegration of the Soviet Union, New Delhi was taken aback by Moscow's *volte face* in casting its vote in the UN in favour of the Pakistani proposal for a regional agreement to prevent nuclear proliferation in South Asia. This happened in November 1991 around the time that Madhavsinh Solanki, the then External Affairs Minister, paid a visit to Moscow. (That was the first high level visit to Moscow from the Indian side after the sea-change in the political scene in the Kremlin in the wake of the defeat of the unconstitutional and undemocratic neo-Stalinist coup.) South Block put up a brave front with the explanation that the Soviet side had given prior intimation of its decision so as to remove any element of surprise that would have normally accompanied such a step. But there was no gainsaying of a shift in the Soviet stand since in the past its practice was to abstain from voting on such issues.

Then came a joint communique issued at the end of the visit of Alexander Rutskoi, the Russian Vice-President, to Islamabad in December 1991. The language of the communique implied that the high ranking Russian leader had accepted the Pakistani stand on Kashmir. The communique conveyed that while Pakistan informed Russia about the "deteriorating human rights condition in Kashmir and about Pakistan's principled position on the J&K dispute", the Russian side "acknowledged Pakistan's position and expressed the hope that the issue would be resolved peacefully through negotiations between Pakistan and India on the basis of international agreements" (a distinct departure from the original Soviet position opposing internationalisation of the Kashmir dispute and favouring its resolution through bilateral negotiations as spelt out in the Shimla Accord). This was yet another *volte face* that gave rise to the impression that Moscow's friendship with New Delhi was in the process of undergoing substantive erosion.

Of course when Yeltsin met P.V. Narasimha Rao for the first time in New York on February 1, 1992 (at the time of the summit meeting at the UN Security Council convened by the British Premier, John Major) the Russian President underscored that regardless of whatever Rutskoi had done in Islamabad the Russian position on Kashmir was the same as the original Soviet stand (that is, that it was a bilateral issue which should be settled bilaterally within the framework of the Shimla Agreement of 1972). Nevertheless, nagging doubts remained and it was clear that Russia could not be taken for granted on such vital matters on which it had solidly stood by India in the past.

This was the time when the "India lobby" in Moscow—comprising specialists and experts on India alongside media practitioners who had studied the processes underway in India in depth—launched an offensive against the pro-Western foreign policy course adopted by the Russia Foreign Ministry in particular. This was conducted in the Russian press taking advantage of the allround transparency in the media engendered by the process of democratisation sweeping the country. Suffice it to refer to one article by Dr Boris Kyuev and Dr Tatyana Shaumiyan, two top scholars of the Russian think-tank on India, that appeared in *Rossiya*, the Russian Parliament's influential periodical. Sharply reacting to the "utterly ill-founded" thesis that India was helped by Russia more than it should have since Russia itself was a 'poor' state, the authors pointed out that whereas the USSR had given gratis help amounting to 50,000 tonnes of wheat only once in 1955 on account of famine in India, India extended 10,000 tonnes of wheat to the Soviet Union in addition to ten million roubles as gratis help in 1991 and $5.8 million as gratis help to Russia in the form of baby food, rice and medicines in early 1992. "We buy from India consumer items at a price which is far lower than one finds in the world market. We have in fact bought more from India than giving India in return. As a result we are indebted to India to the tune of Rs 22 million or nearly a million dollars," they stressed in an effective rebuttal of the anti-Indian charge.

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THE unique transparency in the Russian media and polity sometimes reveals the articulation of views which are distinctly critical of Indo-Russian ties in their present sweep, a legacy of the days of the USSR. But the same transparency has been used more effectively by the pro-Indian elements in Russian society—among intellectuals and government officials in particular—to New Delhi's advantage. This was best seen in the recent open hearings in the Russian Parliament's Commission on Foreign Policy and External Economic Relations, when the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Dmitry Kunadze's contention of upgrading Russian-Pakistan ties to the level of Indo-Russian relations was categorically contested by a large body of officials including Alexander Alexeyev, Head of the Russian Foreign Ministry's South Asia Department. Alexeyev said: "Special relations with India should not be lowered to the level of other South Asian countries. India was, is and will be the constant of our policy in the region...All countries of South Asia are important and they should know we don't wish to ignore them, but they clearly could not be equivalent to our historically-developed relationship with India." That this view eventually prevailed was evident from the final outcome of Yeltsin's visit to India.

The two major visits prior to Yeltsin's trip to India were that of Gennady E. Burbulis, the former Secretary of the Russian Federation's State Council, who came to New Delhi as the Russian President's Special Envoy, in early May 1992; and Defence Minister Sharad Pawar's trip to Moscow in the first half of September 1992.

Burbulis' visit offered the Indian leaders the first opportunity to hold high level in-depth exchanges on how best to develop Indo-Russian relations following the break-up of the USSR. The visit took place amidst uncertainties over the transfer of cryogenic rocket engines and related technology from Russia for India's peaceful space programme under a $250 million contract concluded in 1990. While Burbulis was in Delhi, the US resorted to the familiar arms-twisting tactics on the issue demanding that Moscow should scrap the deal of face the imposition of sanctions of the two trading organisations—Glavkosmos and ISRO. But while, the Russian Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev, parroted the White House contention that the deal violated the MTCR, Burbulis, after his talks in New Delhi, took a totally opposite stand and declared that Moscow would carry out its commitment as per the provisions of the deal. That was the first sign of Russia evolving an independent course regardless of Washington's attitude. (This was more pronounced during Yeltsin's visit this time.) Significantly, in his talks Burbulis also said that while forging ties with other states Russia wanted to "uphold its dignity" and would never develop a relationship (with any country) that (i) did not take into cognisance the "dignity of the Russian state" or (ii) would involve dependence on a third country.

Pawar's visit to Moscow in September was significant on several counts. First, the Defence Minister found the Russian leaders whom he met exuding considerable warmth towards India. Secondly, he claimed that all pending issues on Indo-Russian defence cooperation (including supply of defence spares) had been resolved. Thirdly, Russian Defence Minister Pavel Grachev handed over the text of the draft of a comprehensive military cooperation agreement (which has now been signed). In fact Pawar himself stated that the trend of his discussions in Moscow had brought out the fact that India and Russia shared similar strategic perceptions and interests.

During that visit Sergei Blagovolin, Director of the Russian Institute of National Security and Strategic Studies, one of Russia's top experts on India, made a significant observation. He had earlier mentioned of the pro-China voices within the Russian foreign policy establishment working to remove the past emphasis on relations with India. In his opinion, "of course we need stable relations with China, but India is an old partner and of critical strategic importance to us. Pawar's visit offers an opportunity to discuss the full range of issues between our two countries—not just military matters—and start putting our relations back on track."

Thereafter the presence of a dynamic young Indian Ambassador, Ronen Sen, in Moscow (he reached the Russian capital in early October) substantially helped the process of effective spadework for the Yeltsin visit. In this endeavour the "India lobby" of Russians in or close to the Yeltsin establishment played a vital part. That their efforts were bearing fruit was evident from the interview given in November by Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev to *The Hindustan Times* correspondent, Fred Weir. Kozyrev, a leading figure among the highly placed pro-US officials in Moscow (who now runs the high risk of losing his post), went out of his way to convey that India was central to Russian foreign policy calculations as it was "Asia's biggest democracy" and a "large and important" player in the region. Asserting that pragmatism and mutually beneficial partnership had replaced the ideologised and subjective factors cementing the bonds of Indo-Soviet relations, he said: "Relations with great India were, are and remain a priority direction of Russian diplomacy. We consider them to be a significant factor not only in Asian, but also in global politics. Russian-Indian interaction can also be a factor for stability in the world order that is forming in the post-confrontationist epoch, when, in the words of Rigveda, the understanding that the 'world is a single family' is growing."

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MUCH has already written about the Yeltsin visit. Nevertheless, it is necessary to recount certain specific features of its outcome. The Russian head of state's "firm and unwavering" support to India on the Kashmir question and refusal to extend "military and technical" aid to Pakistan have come as a pleasant surprise given past pronouncements that were either ambiguous or conveyed a tilt towards Pakistan.

In his first official trip to New Delhi in the second half of 1986 the Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, had signed with our late Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, a historic Delhi Declaration for a Non-Violent and Nuclear Weapons Free World that imparted a reasonable degree of impetus to the process of nuclear disarmanent between the superpowers. While Yeltsin, on his part, did not issue any such declaration with the Indian Prime Minister, the Indo-Russian Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation he signed with Narasimha Rao highlights the need to liquidate weapons of mass destruction and support the process of nuclear disarmament. At the same time it underscores the importance of minimum defence capabilities to strengthen security and stability in the region and the world at large. The 14-clause Treaty (valid for 20 years after ratification) which will guide the future development of Indo-Russian relations is naturally bereft of the strategic security clause that was very much a part of the 1971 Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation concluded in Cold War times before the liberation of Bangladesh (towards which the document had played a pivotal role). However, the Indo-Russian Treaty specifies that neither country would take any action that might affect each other's security interests and pledges to uphold the two states' territorial integrity.

But the most concrete results of the visit have been in economic and defence fields. The agreement on rupee-rouble parity—that would bring down India's debt service burden by 30 per cent—is of particular value regardless of the criticism mounted in certain circles seeking to confuse the basic issues involved. As well-informed analysts without any pro-Russian bias have explained, most of this debt is made up of defence credits and the defence help from the erstwhile Soviet Union to India was considerably economical on the whole. Hence the concessional element in the present deal has to be seen in the proper perspective and the agreement should not be regarded as an unequal one. For, when all the factors are taken into account, it is—in the opinion of knowledgeable sources—both fair and reasonable reflecting Russia's eagerness to reforge and reinforce Indo-Russian economic ties. According to senior Indian officials engaged in hammering out the agreement—which, in the words of Yeltsin, was the "victory of compromise..minute by minute, hour by hour"—this arrangement would, while removing an "unnecessary irritant" in trade relations between the two countries, go a long way towards stepping up Indian exports to the Russian Federation. In fact Yeltsin himself asserted that the upswing in Indo-Russian trade would elevate the total trade volume to $ 2.5 billion in 1993, while the following year it should touch $ 3.5 billion.

The Military Technical Cooperation Agreement has sought to allay uncertainty over Russian supply of spare parts for Indian defence forces. No doubt in the prevailing unsettled conditions of Russia there is sufficient ground for scepticism since during the visit of Gennady Burbulis to India solemn commitments on the subject were made but could not be kept by the Russian side. However, judging by the nature of the agreement there is room for optimism as practical steps have been contemplated to overcome the problems connected with the supply of spares. Here too Yeltsin's public utterances on Indian soil are of considerably value. "We agreed that spare parts and equipement that are delivered from Russia would be produced through three different ways in our factories as part of the process of conversion, then setting up joint ventures and then, with our assistance, to build one or two—this would be subject to further agreement—plants to produce spare parts even in India so that you have independence in this respect from other countries." Needless to add, this practical arrangement is fully in conformity with and not in the least detrimental to India's national interests.

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YELTSIN'S speech at the meeting in the Central Hall of Parliament on January 29 merits special mention as a vivid reflection of the openness with which the Russian President expressed himself on several issues. He spoke at length on the major domestic issue in India expressing his forthright positions without in any way exceeding the normal limits set for any visiting dignitary delving into internal matters. "We are aware," he said, "that it is very important for India to preserve inter-communal peace. We know from our own experience how difficult a task that may be. Several evil-minded people can easily pull down a house but it takes joint efforts to keep and decorate a house. I am strongly saying that I am firmly opposed to any attempts to use pending problems in your country to selfish political ends. I can fully assure you that the top leadership in our country, in Russia, is not divided on that subject. Russia is firmly committed to the moral values of world civilisation. Following what we lived through, we see very clearly the meaning of the following truth that animosity cannot be destroyed by animosity. Never. This has never occurred in history and this will never occur in history...Violence cannot be stopped by violence. A compromise of interests would provide the most solid foundation for security and stability..."

Earlier, while referring to the insensate Stalinist brutality in his country, Yeltsin pointed out: "Following the death of millions of people and the crippling of the lives of several generations, we at long last understood that our country has landed in a deadlock. One of the main personalities in Tagore's novel *The Home and the World* says, 'If you commit violence for the sake of your home country, then you are committing violence with respect to your home country.' This is something which we say in our own experience and these words are, of course, self-explanatory. There is nothing I can add to them." The transformations underway in Russia, he explained, were important not for Russia herself but "they also have a global, worldwide context".

He replied to the charge of Russia being pro-West in the following words: "Sometimes, we are criticised for a pro-Western tilt. But I would seek your indulgence and your understanding because what we have to do was, in a different place, to have some agreement with the United States on the elimination of nuclear weapons so that we can build a foundation for peace, throughout the rest of the world, and then build it on that agreement so that we can develop equitable bilateral relations with other countries while striking a balance between the interests of the West and the East. This is the essence of our position and it is my hope that you would support it." He further explained the Asian thrust to the Russian foreign policy, and in that context highlighted the fact that "Russia's relations with India stand on their own and are of immutable nature", adding: "Every period in the inter-relationship between our great countries is valuable and precious to us; because throughout all that time we have been steadily enriching our ties, gaining a priceless experience in interaction between states, peoples and nations."

While insisting that India "should learn more about the political image of current Russia because it is altogether a different country and altogether a different people, compared to what we had two or three years ago", he felt that Russian "politicians of the new wave and leading politologists and experts" should travel not just to the West "but also to the East and gain some insights into the life of India's intellectual heritage because in that respect you are now much ahead of Russia".

Yeltsin paid rich tributes to the Indian people who "debunked the deeply ingrained stereotypes that democratic principles can operate only in conditions of European civilisation". Describing India as the "world's largest democratic federated state, a great state, a great power", he said: "Your experience makes one convinced that freedom, democracy and human rights make up universal values." Russia, he added, "has a big practical interest in learning about the Indian model of mixed economy which constitutes a surprising combination of various types of ownership, entrepreneurial activity, millenium traditions and present-day realities" which constituted a vast potential of inherent dynamics and reform. Turning to reforms in Russia, he underlined that the "main guarantee of successful Russian reforms has to be found, in the first place, in ourselves, in mobilising our own resources". The meaning of those words were not lost on the well-informed.

He also wanted to know about the interaction of all branches of power in this country—"the interaction that shapes the everyday activity of India's state agencies, something which we still have to accomplish".

On the Indo-Russian Treaty he refrained from criticising the former Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation but said: "The new Treaty is more in line with the reality, in line with the interests of the Indian people and the people of Russia. It is our joint intention to impart more pragmatism through bilateral relationship and to get rid of ideological emotions." As for the Military Technical Cooperation Agreement signed the previous day he said while "it is not directed against any third country" its "thrust...is to assist India in protecting its sovereignty, its independence, its integrity and unity".

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ON Kashmir Yeltsin expressed the Russian stand without ambiguity. "I am sure that the vital interests of our two countries coincide. We and are further committed to democratic principles. We and you have a vital interest in preventing any reversal of positive trends in the current world situation. We both have an equal interest in stronger stability and territorial integrity of each other. We support India's position on Kashmir firmly and unwaveringly."

He conveyed appreciation of India mending fences with China, and then made a highly thought-provoking observation. "Russian-Chinese contacts have taken on a new quality and in this connection I want to emphasise that development of Russia-China dialogue is not to suggest that our country is facing an alternative of sorts. Russian-Chinese relations fit in the overall pattern of our Asian policy. I do not think that there is a room for the principle of crowding out of any other country. It is aboslutely inadmissible. This is something that I want to say quite clearly here. Mutual trust, goodneighbourliness, purely peaceful intentions of the three largest states in the world could become a powerful stabilising factor not just in Asia but worldwide." Every word was measured. The importance of the observation lay in the experiences of both Russia and India in dealing with China and the steps now being taken by both in relation to that country. In his talks too Yeltsin covered this aspect in a fairly detailed manner. It would be incorrect to characterise this as the idea of a Sino-Indian-Russian *axis* as has been simplistically presented in a section of the Indian press.

In his discussions Yeltsin had expressed concern over the prospects of a spurt in Islamic fundamentalism. In his Central Hall address he praised "India's efforts to strengthen trust and stability in South Asia" and hoped that those would be further intensified, adding: "This is specially important because this area is being hindered by territorial, political, economic, religious and inter-ethnic differences and contradictions that have come to form a very tight position."

On Indo-Pak normalisation he said: "Russia, as the rest of the world community, looks forward to normalisation of relationship between India and Pakistan. We welcome any steps designed to achieve a mutually acceptable settlement and we would be prepared, as required, to assist India and Pakistan to that end, in any way that would be admissible to both sides. But, if you take military and technical aspects, we do not intend to extend any aid to Pakistan."

Pakistan came in for sharp eriticism for the persisting hostilities in Afghanistan and failure to return the Russian POWs, while Indian help was sought to restore peace in that trouble-torn country.

The Russian President repeatedly emphasised that India and Russia were "partners" in the broad endeavour to build an edifice of trust, understanding and cooperation among all countries. This too was a manifestation of response to the strong plea of the "India lobby" in Moscow not to ignore India in the attempts to befriend the West. During this writer's stay in Moscow last October he had found two articulate members of that lobby—Sergei Strokan of *Moscow News* and Dr Tatyana Shaumiyan of the Institute of Oriental Studies—sharply attacking the then Acting Premier, Igor Gaidar, for stating that Russia was a partner of the US. Such statements, they insisted, ignored the importance of Russia's ties with the Third World and India.

Today Yeltsin is compelled to take an independent course now that Gaidar has been removed and Victor Chernomyrdin elected the new Russian Premier with the strong backing of the Centrist Civic Union opposed to the adoption of outright pro-US policies. Thus on January 29 the Russian President, on return to Moscow from New Delhi, expressed satisfaction over the manner in which his visit had helped "balance" Russia's foreign policy between the West and the East, and said Russia's "independent" line in world affairs would serve the interests of world security, adding: "No single country can rule the world and influence all processes." It is worth recalling that on the eve of his departure to India Yeltsin had conveyed concern over the US policy of "dictating" terms towards Iraq and former Yugoslavia. And on January 31 Russia openly warned that any military action against the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina would would hurt Moscow's ties with the West.

In the overall context Yeltsin's trip to India has shown that while India and Russia do not enjoy any special relationship today, New Delhi occupies a special position in Moscow's world-view, The Russian President's fruitful discussions with the Indian leaders and the valuable agreements and documents signed in New Delhi would have a far-reaching impact on the global scene. According to the Russians accompanying Yeltsin, this was the "most businesslike visit of any Russian leader to India" judging by the concrete results of this voyage of discovery of India. (Every member of the Russian President's official team, barring the ordinary officials, was visiting this country for the first time and all of them were quite struck by the Indian progress, a point highlighted by Yeltsin himself.) Like his trip to China the visit to India has unfolded enormous potentialities of boosting bilateral ties to scale new heights after a period of stagnation. However, what needs to be realised from the Indian standpoint is that the success of the visit is *inter alia* a tribute to the untiring efforts of those friends of India in Russia whose active steps—alongside the changing domestic political landscape of Russia—have now restored the much-needed balance in Russia's international course. Hence the success of the visit also provides a measure of the capacity of public opinion in a democratic system to bring about that balance in conformity with national interests—a term now being frequently used by the Yeltsin dispensation while trying to strike a path distinctly different from the US, Western Europe or Japan. Here too the abiding vitality of Indo-Russian relations would become increasingly relevant with the passage of time. ■

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TRIBUTE

Remembering Mazhar Ali Khan

I.K. GUJRAL

The author, a former Minister for External Affairs and the erstwhile Indian Ambassador to the USSR, was a close friend and colleague of Mazhar Ali Khan in the students' movement in Lahore in the late thirties and early forties. —Editor

Rahim—a common friend and comrade in the freedom struggle era—sent a shocking telegram from Rawalpindi: "Our friend Mazhar has left us soon after attending your Republic Day function that had made him so happy." Unbelievable! I phoned Lahore to speak to his wife, Tahira, and their illustrious son, Tariq Ali. The unexpected blow had shattered them but their response was courageous. Only a few weeks earlier his doctors in London had okayed the condition of his heart.

Mazhar has legated a horde of friends in India and a saga of courage and abiding faith in values acquired during the freedom struggle.

The partition of the country had created many oddities and imbalances. A loud one was in the sphere of journalism. Lahore used to be a leading media centre of North India. But partition and the riots that followed pushed out the people and the entrenched institutions.

The vacuum persuaded the late Mian Iftkhar-ud-din, an ardent Leftist and one-time President of the Punjab Congress, to found a trust that owned English and Urdu dailies—*The Pakistan Times* and *Imroz*. He entrusted the editorial chairs to Faiz Ahmad Faiz and Mazhar Ali Khan. But the twilight of freedom of expression in Pakistan was not to last long. Soon the heavy military boots crushed them. The trust and its papers were "nationalised". The writers and scribes were pushed out into the wilderness or prolonged incarcerations. Mazhar lost his vocation but sustained his linkage with the peace movement and various friendship associations with the socialist countries. Compulsions of Sino-Pak relations stood in the way of outlawing them. All political activities were banned but agitations for social welfare and resistance to the atrocious behaviour of the fundamentalists provided an outlet. Tahira and Mazhar were in the vanguard.

Indo-Pak relations, one says with deep regret, were never allowed to flower by the military. They knew full well that any whiff of democracy or liberalism from here would add to their discomfort. The internal rigours of censorship could not permit entry of the liberated media from the neighbourhood. Once in a while Mazhar met some of his old friends in Moscow or elsewhere but a visit to India was taboo. All the same, he kept his chin up. Never compromising, never losing faith in the values of freedom and democracy.

The convulsions and contradictions within the Pakistani ruling junta generated unfamiliar situations and dilemmas. General Ayub's choice of Bhutto—the young flamboyant scion of a Sindhi feudal aristocracy—as his Foreign Minister, sealed his fate and determined a new course of the country's history. The articulate Minister first led him into a war with India and later to his political doom. But the fall of General Ayub only brought forth another General who was a degree more imprudent than his predecessor!

The new situation incarnated Bhutto into an unexpected role: of an agitator and a mass leader. His rhetoric of "*Roti, Kapra, aur Makan*" attracted the intellgentsia and perusaded the dormant progressives to back him up. Soon one saw most of the Leftists of yesteryears hailing him. Mazhar, Faiz and all those familiar names constituted his Brains Trust and provided him the much-needed intellectual input and Leftist colouration.

◆

THE history of 1971 and all that led to the break-up of Pakistan is too well known to be narrated. The surprise remains, or is it the lack of information, that such elements that had the ear of Bhutto did not stop him from placing his personal ambition above those of the nation's.

The Indira Gandhi-Bhutto talks for a durable peace were epochal. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto had come to Simla with a large entourage of officials and supporters—amongst them was Mazhar Ali Khan, at that time the Chief Editor of *The Dawn* at Karachi. His appointment and inclusion in the delegation were meant to convey a message particularly to the progressives in India who occupied positions of authority and importance in that phase of Mrs Gandhi's regime.

Soon after reaching Simla he telephoned at an unearthly hour of the night demanding that I be woken up. With characteristic humour he asked my aide, "*Jaldi uthao, yahan mulkon ki kismat badal rahi hai aur wazir so rahai hain?*" He wanted to know as to why I was not at Simla at this crucial moment: "How can a member of her Kitchen Cabinet be absent...?" The touch of sarcasm was obvious. He came to Delhi from Simla to revive old friendships and update his knowledge of the changing India. At a critical moment during the Simla talks he had intervened to persuade Mrs Gandhi to appreciate Bhutto's impediments and that had helped.

Bhutto's radical incarnation was shortlived and so was his association with the progressives. Mazhar Ali and others of his ilk distanced themselves from the PPP though at a later phase the relationship was revived. By then Bhutto had been pushed out of power and life by his chosen Army Chief.

The Zia phase was the darkest patch for all those who had even a pale faith in liberalism. Harsh policing and hard incarcerations would not satisfy the dictator's demands to speedily theocrise the state. Lashes in public were now the order of the day.

The militarist's logic of harsh internal censorship would not permit the entry of even a whiff of freedom of thought from outside—particularly India. But Mazhar's fortitude was remarkable. He continued to raise his enfeebled voice through his weekly—*Viewpoint*. It had a very small circulation but it was the only authentic voice of the people and their anguish.

Our contacts were snapped till we met again in Moscow in the mid-seventies. Faiz, the legendary poet of the subcontinent, was living there in exile like many other intellectuals of Pakistan. Mazhar got a very unexpected exit visa to visit the Soviet Union to attend a peace conference and to admit his son, Mahir, in the Lumumba University. Mazhar did not want him to languish in the suffering environment of Zia's Pakistan.

Mazhar's agony had been compounded by the Emergency that Mrs Gandhi had imposed. India of Nehru and even of Mrs Gandhi had kept the rays of hope kindled in our neighbourhood. But his dilemma was manifest. His fellow-thinkers in the CPI in India and the Soviet Union had readily swallowed Mrs Gandhi's theory of the "CIA conspiracy to destabilise India". He wanted me to tell him the truth but there was a wide chasm in our perceptions. It was too difficult for him to reconcile with JP or Morarji Desai as leaders of free thought. The long history of the communist movement had viewed them as "reactionary".

◆

THE mid-thirties and early forties had witnessed a nationalist upsurge in West Punjab (that is now Pakistan). The Doaba, Malwa and Majah—that is now the Indian Punjab—had a radical anti-imperialist history. So, the British devised a new method for stone-walling the harsh winds of nationalism. The feudal lords got together to constitute the Unionist Party to safeguard the interests of the landed gentry. Sir Sikander Hayat Khan was a deft politician. As the Premier of Punjab he was able to resist the onslaughts of both the Congress and the Muslim League at the same time. In the midst of this formidable bout, it was both surprising and exciting to see a big landlord like Mian Iftkhar-ud-din coming under Nehru's spell to join the Congress that had hardly any Punjabi Muslim in its ranks. Mian Sahib's education in Cambridge had radicalised his thinking. Nehru inspired him but he had an even more abiding faith in the Communist Party.

In a way an even more earth-shaking event was the radical commitments made by the two brothers: Nawabzadas Mahmud Ali Khan and Mazhar Ali Khan. The two tall, handsome brothers were closely related to Sir Sikander Hayat Khan and their father himself was one of the leading members of the landed aristocracy. Mahmud joined the Punjab Congress to assist its new President, Mian Sahib, while Mazhar joined the radical Students' Federation. It was here that our close association began. For a number of years the two of us were its President and General Secretary respectively.

Though he later married Tahira—Sir Sikander's daughter, a lady of immense charm and dedication to the Leftist ideology—this did not inhibit the government from incarcerating Mazhar.

Any description of Mazhar would be incomplete if it did not mention his pronounced sense of humour. Soon after the individual satyagraha movement, Gandhiji had ordained the launching of the communal harmony movement. Mian Sahib, Mazhar and myself teamed to visit Ambala Cantonment amongst various other cities and towns. Mian was as short-statured as Mazhar was imposingly tall. The Reception Committee mistook him for the former and garlanded him profusely as Mian Sahib watched gleefully. The mistake was disclosed by Mazhar himself as soon as he was seated in a tonga to head the *'Zindabad'* shouting procession. The embarrassed Congressmen snatched all garlands and started looking for Mian Sahib who was left far behind in the crowd.

Misperceptions regarding the nature of the World War II and later the role of the Muslim League cost the Communist Party and its front organisations dearly. All radicals—particularly the Muslims—lost their bearings and their support-base. With this began a new chapter in the history of the subcontinent. Mazhar was amongst those who quickly got back his elan that induced him to play a role that he performed so heroically.

Perhaps he had a premonition of his death that induced him to wind up *Viewpoint* last year. The financial burden was too heavy for his dwindling resources. We met at his Lahore residence in April for the last time. He was in poor health and sad mood. The world events—particularly those prevailing in his own country—had saddened him. In a way it was the end of a dream for him. Tahira told us how soon after their dinner with us at Delhi during my tenure as the Foreign Minister the Pakistani intelligence and the media of the fundamentalist hue had hounded them. A canard was publicised that Mazhar had approached me, on behalf of Ms Bhutto, to unleash a war on Pakistan. Mazhar fought them back. They were forced to publicly apologise! ■

Call NIC Meeting

Dear Prime Minister,

The country has been deeply disturbed by the events in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992 and its aftermath. A number of issues have come to the fore including the imperative need to reassert the concept of the Indian state as defined in the Preamble to the Constitution. We are witness to communal polarisation, fear psychosis and ghettoisation of communities that is taking place in cities like Bombay where there have been vicious riots.

Some of us, journalist members of the NIC, have travelled to Bhopal, Bombay, Aligarh and other places and have participated in discussions with media colleagues and concerned citizens of all descriptions. This has confirmed our belief that a host of strategies need to be developed at several levels to counter fear, hatred, anger and disinformation and to restore a sense of confidence, direction and fraternity among all sections of the people. This is not something that Government can do alone or even political parties. Even trade unions have been paralysed.

The disinformation campaign being spread by certain organisations is being carefully orchestrated and has been greatly instrumental in promoting bewilderment and ex-post facto justification for much that has happened. This has to be strongly and effectively countered. The electronic media has yet to discover its true role in these immensely important tasks.

We, media-members of the NIC, request you kindly to convene an urgent meeting of the Council to consider such a broad agenda. The nation faces a grave and present danger which the secular, democratic forces must confront through concerted action to clear purpose.

A NIC meeting at this time would provide a national platform to address the task of healing the wounds and developing a strategy for social reconstruction. We commend this suggestion to you and hope it will meet with a favourable response.

With our highest regards,

Yours Sincerely,

Prem Bhatia, *Columnist;* G. Kasturi, *Former Editor*, **The Hindu**; Raj Mohan Gandhi, *Columnist;* Khushwant Singh, *Columnist;* Nikhil Chakravartty, *Editorial Adviser*, **Mainstream**; Prabhash Joshi, *Editor*, **Jansatta** (Delhi); B.G. Verghese, *Columnist;* Ramoji Rao, *Editor*, **Eenadu**, (Hyderabad); Prabhu Chawla, *Editor*, **Indian Express**; Shahid Siddiqui, *Editor*, **Nai Duniya** (Delhi); Madhav Gadkari, *Former Editor*, **Loksatta**; R.K. Mishra, *Journalist*; M.J. Akbar, *Former Editor*, **The Telegraph**; Govind Talwalkar, *Editor*, **Maharashtra Times**.

B.G. VERGHESE : Fact and Fiction

(Continued from page 6)

Dashmani Akhara, which houses the *chadi* taken out in a ceremonial procession to Amarnath during the annual pilgrimage (and described in the RSS list as "temple burnt, dharamsala burnt"), were both unharmed and functional. Both had CRPF pickets located within their precincts which had drawn militant fire on occasion, as had other police posts, but had not suffered damage except slight bullet marks on their outer walls and doors. Both the CRPF post commander and the pujari in each case assured us that it was the CRPF post and not the temple that had been targeted.

The same was said to us at the Mata Khir Bhawani Mandir, another ancient and greatly venerated shrine, at Village Tulmula, near Ganderbal some 23 kilometres from Srinagar. Other unguarded temples had not been touched as the pujaris themselves pointed out.

Extensive inquiries with a variety of officials and security personnel at all levels, media persons, political workers and others failed to elicit any report of wilful attacks on temples in the state up to date, after the Anantnag episode in 1986. This personal visit formed the basis of the second article in the *Indian Express* on June 10, 1991.

At a meeting of the National Integration Council in the spring of 1992, the BJP President, Dr Murli Manohar Joshi, repeated the allegation of temples being destroyed in Kashmir. Being a member of the NIC, I was able immediately to challenge his statement and asked him to specify the temples that had been damaged or attacked. He was unable to do so. He had just conducted his so-called *ekta yatra* to Srinagar but did not think it necessary to visit any of the shrines stated to have been destroyed. Why? He could very easily have established the truth of what has become one of the BJP's principal Ayodhya planks. But, like the jesting Pilate who asked what was the truth, he too did not wait for an answer.

Following an interview of mine on the subject, published in the *Jansatta* of January 10, T.N. Chaturvedi, the former Attorney-General and now a BJP MP, wrote a letter to the Editor referring to my *Express* article of May 8, 1991. He cited the answer to Unstarred Question No. 2604 in the Lok Sabha by the Minister of State for Home Affairs on

Statement of Religious Places Damaged/Destroyed

No.	Name of the place of worship	Location of place of worship	Date of incident	Details of damage
TEMPLES:				
1.	Temple	Bijbeharra, Anantnag	14.1.1989	An explosion took place along the outer wall of the temple causing minor damage to it.
2.	Ranbir Bhawan, Sathoo, Barbar Shah	Srinagar	24.3.1989	Two bomb explosions took place in Ranbir Bhawan resulting in smashing of glass panes; besides a portion of the ceiling of the building was damaged.
3.	Subarkoot Gorkha	Bhaderwah, Doda	25.9.1989	The temple was gutted in a fire and idol installed in it was subsequently found missing.
4.	Bongam, Shopian	Pulwama Distt.	3.10.1989	The temple was set ablaze by some miscreants. FIR No. 437/89 registered in this regard was closed as untraced.
5.	Bun, Doda	Doda Distt.	10.11.1989	A temple at village Bun was set on fire by some miscreants causing damage to it.
6.	Tikkipora	Lolab, Kupwara	10.11.1989	Fire broke out in the temple at Tikkipora Lolab, Kupwara causing major damage to it.
7.	Shiv Mandir	Khan Mohalla, Banihal, Doda	10.11.1989	An explosion took place at Shiv Mandir at Khan Mohalla Banihal, Doda causing damage to it.
8.	Chowgam	Qazigund, Anantnag	11.11.1989	Fire broke out in the temple at, Chowgam, Qazigund District, Anantnag causing damage to it.
9.	Bharat	Doda	11/12.11.1989	Two temples were set on fire at Bharat, Doda by some miscreants causing damage to these temples.
10.	Shiv Mandir	Sheetalnath, Habbakadal, Srinagar	13.11.1989	Fire broke out in Shiv Mandir, Sheetalnath, Habbakadal, Srinagar which engulfed the adjoining building of the temple causing major damage to the temple complex. FIR No. 67/90 registered in this regard at P/S Kralkhud is under investigation.
11.	Bohru Temple	Sopore, Baramulla	16.11.1989	Bohru Temple was completely gutted in a fire at Sopore.
12.	Shopian	Shopian, Pulwama	15.12.1989	Some miscreants set ablaze the temple and its Dharamshalla at Shopian. FIR No. 499/89 registered at P/S Shopian stands challaned in the court of law.
13.	Shiv Temple	Attal-Garh, Bhaderwah, Doda	2.6.1990	Fire broke out in Shiv Temple at Atal-Garh, Bhaderwah, Doda due to which wooden structure of the temple was gutted.
14.	Bhaderwah	Bhaderwah, Doda	9/10.5.1990	During the night intervening 9/10 May, a temple was set on fire at Bhaderwah causing damage to it.
15.	Bandi	Doda	24.5.1990	A temple at Bandi (Gandoh) Doda was damaged in an act of arson.
16.	Champal	Doda	24.5.1990	A temple at Champal (Gandoh) Doda was damaged in an act of arson.
17.	Laxmi Temple	Padshahibagh, Bijbeharra, Anantnag	4.8.1990	Laxmi temple at Padshahibagh, Bijbeharra District, Anantnag was set ablaze by miscreants. Roof of the temple was gutted partially.
18.	Jogilankar	Rainawari, Srinagar	24.7.1991	The building within the mandir premises at Jogilankar, Rainawari was set ablaze by subversives. Case FIR No. 35/91 registered at P/S Rainawari is under investigation.
19.	Devi Mandir	Baramulla	9.10.1991	A temple called Devi Mandir was set ablaze by some miscreants. FIR No. 259/91 registered in this regard is under investigation.
20.	Bharav Mandir	Baramulla	10.10.1191	A temple called Bharav Mandir was set ablaze. FIR No. 261/91 registered in this connection is under investigation.
21.	Ganpatyar Temple	Srinagar	14.11.1991	Militants fired a rocket towards CRPF bunder at Ganpatyar which missed the target and hit the upper storey of the temple causing extensive damage to it.
MOSQUES:				
1.	Chinar Masjid	Ganderpora, Srinagar	16.9.1990	In a fire incident, the Chinar Masjid at Ganderpora Idgah, Srinagar was damaged.
2.	Aishan Sahib Mosque	Zainakadal, Srinagar	29.9.1990	In a fire incident, the Aishan Sahib Mosque was damaged.
3.	Purshyar	Habbakadal, Srinagar	30.6.90/1.7.90	In a fire incident, the mosque at Purshyar, Habbkadal was gutted.
4.	Shumnagh Trehgam	Kupwara	15.10.1990	The mosque at Shumnagh Trehgam, Kupwara was gutted in a fire incident.
5.	Malteng	Dalgate, Srinagar	22.2.1991	Glass panes and corner of mosque was damaged at Malteng Dalgate near UNO office due to a rocket attack.
6.	(Illegible)	Khankei-Sokhta, Srinagar	19.9.1991	Extensive damage was caused to the mosque due to a fire incident.
7.	(Illegible)	Reshinhar-Nawakadal, Srinagar	19.9.1991	The mosque was badly damaged during cross firing incident between militants and security forces.
8.	(Illegible)	Magam, Beerwah, Budgam	2/3.9.1991	Due to bomb blast near CRPF picket at Magam, the mosque was damaged.

9.	Mosque	Kupwara	1991	Three mosques were reported to have been damaged in the fire incident in the District.
10.	Mosque	Baramulla	1991	Two mosques were reportedly damaged partially during a cross firing incident which took place between militants and the security forces.
11.	Mosque	Sopore, Baramulla	1991	One mosque was partially damaged in an incident of cross firing at Sopore.
12.	Mosque	Bijbeharra, Anantnag	1991	In an incident of fire, the mosque at Bijbeharra, Anantnag was gutted.
13.	Mosque	Anantnag Town	1991	In an incident of fire, the mosque at Anantnag town was reportedly gutted.

Total No. of temples/Mandirs : 22
Total No. of Mosques : 16
Total : 38

March 12, 1992. In a reply to Dileepbhai Sanghani, the Minister stated that "the Government of J & K has advised that 38 religious places were damaged in Jammu and Kashmir—13 in 1989, nine in 1990, and 16 in 1991". Since the question referred to was damage to "religious places", the answer did not attempt any breakdown by categories: temple, mosque or gurdwara. Again, since this was an unstarred question, there was no occasion for supplementaries to draw out any further details.

My own recent inquiries authoritatively establish that 38 religious places were indeed affected, including Ganpatyar and Sheetalnath in Srinagar. Of the remaining 36, many were destroyed in fires such as the one that swept through part of Sopore in November 1989. No temples were targeted as such though they did suffer collateral damage or might have been gutted as at Sopore. In some other cases, the damage was caused by militant action such as explosions and arson. In all, some 22 Hindu religious places or premises were affected. The remaining 16 incidents involved mosques, idgahs and dargahs in Srinagar and other parts of the State. The reasons were the same as in the case of the temples: fires, a bomb blast at a nearby CRPF picket, cross-fire between the militants and security forces, and a misfired rocket attack. FIRs were lodged in some cases and investigations are continuing or have been closed for lack of evidence. Deliberate communal attacks on places of worship appear to be ruled out.

There have been reports of damage to temples in Jammu and Kashmir after the events in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992. Official sources indicated that some 52 religious places, many of them small and isolated structures, were attacked stealthily at night causing minor damage in most cases. Some 38 of these incidents took place in the Valley—27 of them in Anantnag district, seven in Doda, and the others in Kupwara, Baramulla, Pulwama and Rajouri districts, and a few in Srinagar. There have been no reports of communal mobs attacking temples as there have been elsewhere in the wake of the post-Ayodhya riots in which both mosques and temples have sadly been targets of violence.

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NO one will condone deliberate attacks on or destruction of any place of worship anywhere. In riotous situations, mobs do go on the rampage and collateral damage is possible in the process of exchange of fire in conditions of insurgency. These are very different from deliberately planned attacks by one community on places of worship of another—which is what the BJP-VHP-RSS essentially insinuates. It is one thing to report hearing of an incident of vandalism and seek an authoritative finding, and another to make strong and repeated assertions on the basis of rumours. It is amazing that anybody should assert that famous shrines and landmarks like the Ganpatyar temple and Dashmani Akhara in Srinagar have been "demolished" and "burnt" when thousands pass by everyday and would immediately know of any such untoward event. These shrines are the equivalent of the Lakshminarayan temple or the Jama Masjid in Delhi. Last year, an all-time record of over 53,000 pilgrims visited Amarnath. With part of the procession presumably setting out from the Dashmani Akhara in Srinagar, surely any wilful damage to temples in the Valley would have prompted demands for inquiry and action. Did any of this happen?

The gravemen of the BJP charge, however, is that a large number of temples in Kashmir were damaged or destroyed between 1989 and November 1992. The only two lists actually furnished have not stood the test of impartial scrutiny. The government has unfortunately allowed insidious propaganda to be peddled without challenge. The BJP-VHP-RSS *parivar* has made exaggerated and unfounded allegations about damage to temples in Kashmir, wholly out of context, to justify and promote a sectarian agenda. This deception must be exposed. Facts cannot be "fixed" to fit a pre-determined theory. ■

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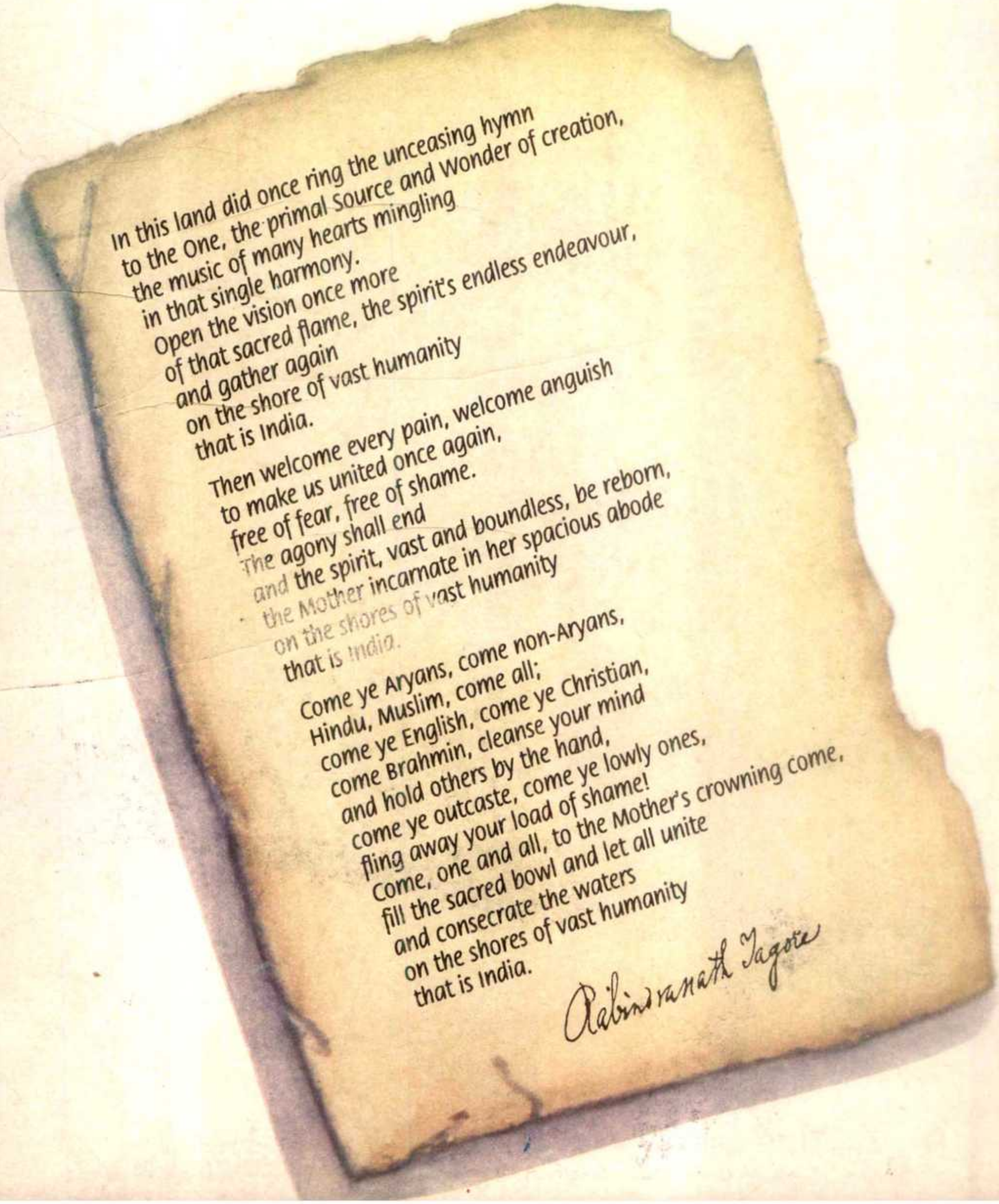

In this land did once ring the unceasing hymn
to the One, the primal Source and Wonder of creation,
the music of many hearts mingling
in that single harmony.
Open the vision once more
of that sacred flame, the spirit's endless endeavour,
and gather again
on the shore of vast humanity
that is India.

Then welcome every pain, welcome anguish
to make us united once again,
free of fear, free of shame.
The agony shall end
and the spirit, vast and boundless, be reborn,
the Mother incarnate in her spacious abode
on the shores of vast humanity
that is India.

Come ye Aryans, come non-Aryans,
Hindu, Muslim, come all;
come ye English, come ye Christian,
come Brahmin, cleanse your mind
and hold others by the hand,
come ye outcaste, come ye lowly ones,
fling away your load of shame!
Come, one and all, to the Mother's crowning come,
fill the sacred bowl and let all unite
and consecrate the waters
on the shores of vast humanity
that is India.

Rabindranath Tagore

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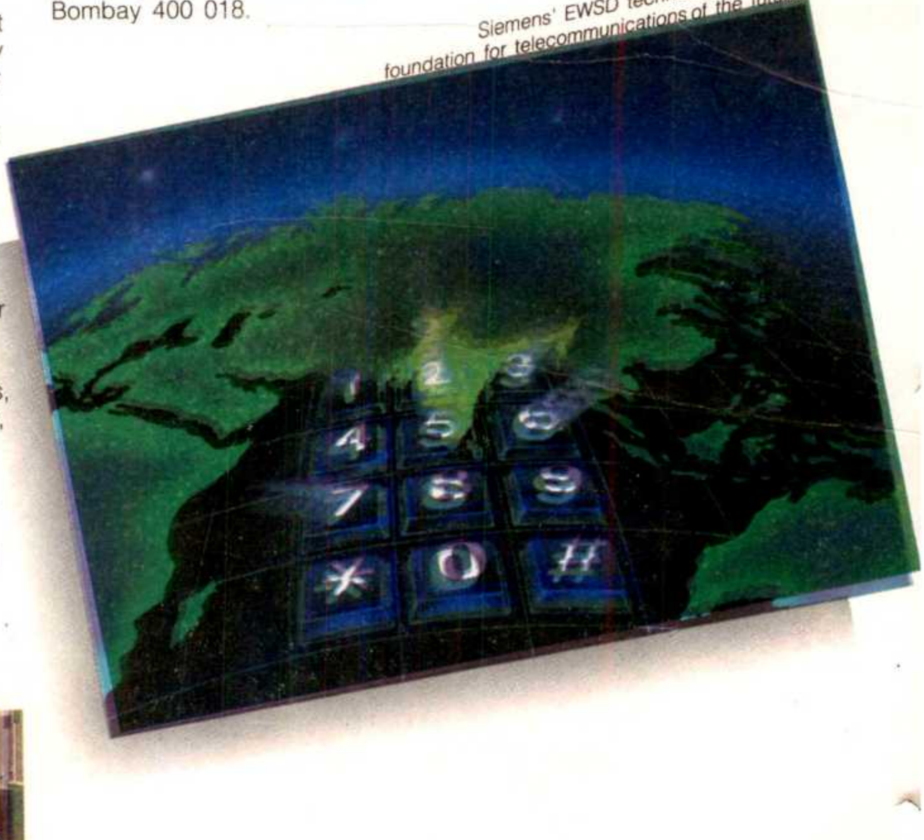

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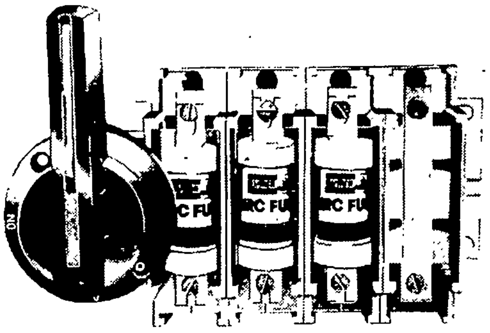

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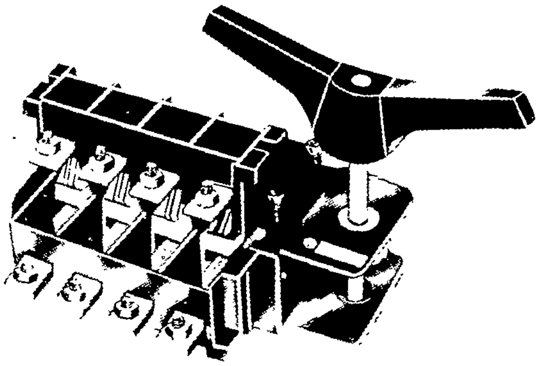

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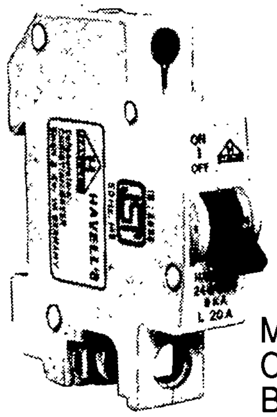

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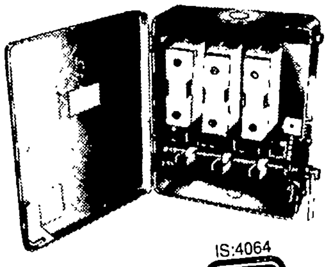

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EDITORIAL

Bad to Worse

The banning of the BJP-sponsored rally on February 25 in New Delhi has evoked strong protests from secular-democratic public opinion.

But even if one accepts the government's contention that the temporary ban on all political rallies in the Capital is essentially a part of the Centre's policy of maintaining law and order and preserving peace in Delhi and its environs, there is no guarantee that this would be possible on February 25 given the police handling of communal violence in the trans-Jamuna area last December. Thus what is imperative is mass mobilisation to foil the *Sangh Parivar's* pernicious designs (as was done commendably by residents of South Delhi's Chittaranjan Park when they successfully resisted the BJP's attempt in the recent past to launch a campaign against Bangladeshi infiltrators, something perceived by secular democrats as a stepping-stone towards initiating yet another anti-Muslim offensive). Some strides are belatedly being taken in that direction no doubt, but the general weakness of the secular-democratic forces in the Capital being a fact of life any such step at this late stage cannot but be of a symbolic character.

Let us now turn to the Congress. Not only is it in a state of paralysis, the stark division within its ranks has assumed such dimensions as seldom seen in the past.

The Bombay riots aggravated this division within the Maharashtra Congress and it is now certain that Sudhakarrao Naik's continuance as the Chief Minister would further accentuate problems on this score. The Sharad Pawar camp's resolute bid to unseat Naik is a clear reflection of the extent to which factionalism has increased as a result of Naik's non-performance during the riots.

However, what happened between the supporters and opponents of the PCC chief, J.B. Patnaik, within the Orissa Congress was literally unprecedented. Not only did they come to blows; they actually resorted to armed attacks on each other resulting in several casualities. This has doubtless dealt one of the severest blows to the image of the Congress as a responsible political organisation.

The postponement of the Tripura poll by the Election Commission has also enhanced bickerings within the Congress in the State. That there was widespread pre-election violence in the State was, of course, well-known but the ruling dispensation there did not expect such a move from the side of the Chief Election Commissioner. The local Congress bosses are now dumbstruck and their adversaries in the party are getting ready for a showdown at the earliest possible opportunity.

The prospects of breakdown of the Congress-AIADMK alliance in Tamil Nadu threatens the very survival of the Narasimha Rao Government at the Centre. On a different plane this government is unable, for reasons of expediency, to jettison the new economic course set by Dr Manmohan Singh under the dictate of the World Bank-IMF combine. But in view of its disastrous consequences the government cannot expect the Left to suddenly back that course in the wake of the communal polarisation across the country. The latest hefty 20 per cent hike in the price of levy sugar—that is bound to raise the sugar price in the open market—will cause more hardship to the consumer and this cannot be offset by the incentives to the sugarcane growers as have been offered. In this situation it is foolhardy to expect the opponents of the government's economic strategy to remain silent spectators.

In view of these developments it is difficult to predict how the Narasimha Rao Government proposes to weather the anticipated storm—which might turn into a gale—when Parliament reopens for its budget session on February 23. Only ingenious moves aimed at streamlining the party organisation by enforcing discipline, reversing the anti-people policies it has so far pursued in the economic sphere, and mobilising the secular-democratic public opinion to meet the majoritarian challenge posed by the *Hindutva* protagonists can unfold a new path. However, these are too much to expect from a dispensation which has shown little capacity of evolving an innovative approach to problems in the course of its tenure in power since mid-1991.

February 17

S.C

Threat to Constitutional Structure

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

A situation of unprecedented confusion synchronising with the onset of serious crisis for the entire constitutional structure of the Indian state presents before the nation today.

On the one side is the outright challenge of the BJP, the most aggressive of political parties, threatening to defy the entire administration in a manner never seen before; and on the other, the ruling party at the Centre presents a picture of utter disunity with factions not only squabbling but at times taking recourse to physical violence to settle scores with each other. The prospect of a total breakdown of the system is no longer a matter of mere academic disputations but frighteningly an emerging reality. One wonders whether this premonition bothers those at the helm of public affairs in our country today.

With the imposition of the ban on the mammoth protest rally of 15 lakhs that the BJP leadership has threatened to stage in the Capital on February 25, it is clear that the overwhelming mass of public opinion in the country wants that such a confrontation should be avoided in view of the tense communal situation prevailing in many parts of North India. Most of the political parties outside the ruling Congress have disfavoured the imposition of the executive ban as such—sensitive as they are to the imperative of upholding civil liberties particularly in troubled times such as these—but at the same time have openly warned against such a massive rally that may touch off an explosion of communal violence which nobody—neither the BJP nor the government—would be in a position to control. In fact, such an assurance from the BJP has largely lost its validity after what happened on December 6 when the Babri Masjid was demolished in the face of the BJP Government's assurance to protect it.

Defying all appeals for forbearance, even by those usually friendly to it, the BJP leadership has taken up the ban itself as a challenge, and has unleashed a campaign of such venom that it openly undermines its claims to be a responsible party wedded to constitutional politics. A noteworthy feature of this latest round of BJP campaign is the open diatribe against the minority community, with its more aggressive supporters openly questioning if tolerance has at all been an axiom of Hindu faith. In other words, the former style of BJP campaigning which tried to project *Hindutva* as a way of life in which tolerance towards other communities was constantly claimed, the latest model of the BJP Raj promises no such approach of tolerance towards the non-Hindu minority communities.

◆

THE contours of the *Hindutva* that one can discern from the latest phase of propaganda by different members of the *Sangh Parivar* are thus one of an aggressive, bigoted approach. The opening that Vajpayee's reasoned stand offered on the morrow of the demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya on December 6, seems to have been abandoned by the *Sangh Parivar*, whose present stand hardly takes into account the need for the BJP to abjure an aggressive Hindu communal posture.

In this context, one has to note that Advani during his recent visit to Bombay made no effort at demarcating the BJP from the Shiv Sena with its avowed campaign for calculated and systematic pogrom of the Muslim community. One recalls the suicidal phase of Akali politics when even its moderate leaders did not care to demarcate themselves from the militants with the result that today they have been reduced to the status of prisoners of the militant elements. Such a retreat from the moderate constitutional line can hardly enhance the position of the BJP in the national scene.

With all its lampooning of what it calls "pseudo-secularism" and of its opponents' bid to capture the Muslim vote-bank, it is time for the BJP leadership to understand that any party aspiring to govern this country has to convince a good section of the minority community about its serious concern for its life and living as citizens of this country. This is precisely what in the eyes of the public demarcates Gandhiji's *Ram Rajya* from the prevailing Ram cult of the militant battalions of the *Sangh Parivar*.

Here is the real test for the BJP leadership in its bid to be the future rulers of this republic. The controversy over the proposed February 25 rally has to be judged against this background, and not as a mere law-and-order issue. In dealing with this forbidding phenomenon of aggressive communalism, political parties ranged against it have to make a common cause in defence of constitutional politics of the parliamentary pattern. Inevitably, the task of forging such a common stand falls on the largest among the political parties, which happens to be the Congress party.

As the ruling party without majority support in Parliament, the Congress has all the more the responsibility of conducting itself as a unified political formation which would not permit factional politics to debilitate its strength and influence before the public. What is amazing is that at the very moment when unity is the need of the hour, the Congress party has succeeded in emerging as a house divided against itself.

TRIBUTE

Saburo Okita

SURENDRA J. PATEL

With the recent passing away of Dr Saburo Okita an age comes to an end, an age in which purposive economic planning enabled Japan to catch up with the most adanced nations of the world in a little over thirty years.

Dr Saburo Okita was the Director of the Planning Division of Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI). He was the brain behind Japan's imperial plan to double national output in ten years. The strategy adopted then was a watershed in economic history. Japan's growth rate averaged 10 per cent, three-and-a-half times faster than the long-term historical experience. Instead of doubling national output Japan indeed trebled it in ten years (1956-66). It doubled it again in the next ten years (1966-76) and doubled it further in the following ten years (1976-86). Thus in thirty years Japan raised its national output twelve times—an achievement which Great Britain took more than a hundred years to accomplish. Dr Saburo Okita was the architect of this unprecedented transformation.

There are three landmarks which should be singled out to reflect the broad thinking of Dr Saburo Okita. He once disclosed that after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki when the whole region was lying desolate and destroyed, he collected four or five of his colleagues and sitting in the bomb shelter they evolved the blueprint of Japan's economic planning. At that time the Americans too had a low level blueprint but they were unaware of the blueprint prepared by Dr Okita and his colleagues as it was kept secret from them. So even then Dr Okita had a vision of Japan's future, a vision independent of foreign thinking and in full conformity with Japan's national interests. Indeed he always had his country's national interests in view.

The author, a distinguished economist, is a Visiting Professor at Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia and the Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research, Ahmedabad.

Dr Okita used to remark that in the early phase of post-War American occupation of Japan the Japanese were blessed by the fact that the country's economists, mostly Marxists, were in the universities. They were busy debating the class structure of Japan and the influence it exercised, or did not exercise, in promoting Japan's past development in creating internal contradiction of one or the other type and finally leading it to Pearl Harbour. This left open space for Japan to proceed unhindered by empty debate to its accelerated transformation.

There was also a third story which is highly illustrative of the main pillars of Japan's economic strategy. In one after-dinner conversation with us in Helsinki, Finland, he was asked as to why Japan did not solicit foreign investment. With a soft smile Dr Okita replied: we were all intense nationalists wanting to make Japan the most advanced country in the world. How can we allow even a single foreigner, when he did not understand any Japanese, to be in the Governing Board of any of our major enterprises? We were not just planning; we were indeed plotting the course of Japan's economic supremacy.

Stories do not make a man, nor indeed a nation. But they catch the spirit of the man and the temper of the times better than dozens of erudite volumes on the life of the person concerned. And these stories have a bearing on what is happening in India—the government's Hanuman leap into instant globalisation, unmindful of the great traditions of the country built by the vision of Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru.

Here was a gentle, soft-spoken, wise man with immense modesty and yet with burning national pride which outsiders could not fathom from his modest behaviour. The world has lost in Dr Saburo Okita probably the most successful practitioner of planning which combined the virtues of capitalist efficiency with the overall socialistic direction of the country's advance.

The Leadership of Cranks

K.F. RUSTAMJI

Oh! No. No. I don't mean political cranks, though God knows there are a lot of them around in the politics of the Indian subcontinent.

I mean the cranks, who as *kar sevaks* brought down the Babri structure—the cranks who trooped out big processions in Bangladesh to invade India—and the cranks who rose in tumult in Pakistan to kill Hindus and destroy their temples. There is a touch of grotesque irresponsibility in the cranks of the Indian subcontinent. What should not be missed, however, is that they want to arouse interest in each other's affairs. They have started a new wave—of interference, if you like to call it that; of concern, if you want to appear human; and of unity, if you want to look into the distance. Babri seems to have brought us closer together, in the wrong way.

Leaders of all parties have made use of crowds in India, and crowds have often gone beyond their leaders in the hysteria that was created. Our history of the civil disobedience movements and partition are replete with instances of crowds making and dictating policies. It is "yesterday's madness" and "tomorrow's silence, triumph, or despair", as Omar Khayyam put it. And it is not only in India, all over the world crowds have made history while the leaders have waited silently in a corner to garner the credit.

It is not as if people in Bangladesh have become our fickle friends. They realised the absurdity of a procession intruding into India to lodge a protest. They stopped it with gunfire in order to assure us that it was only political quacks that were at the back of it. But what about the resolution passed by their legislature? Basically they are stressing an underlying unity in the area, which we are apt to miss. What they are saying is that we cannot be indifferent to each other. There is a fundamentalist flavour it is true, but it is coloured with the desire to show that they are not cowed down by the Big Bully across the border. In our relationship with Bangladesh, we ought to accept that a lot they say is only to overcome their syndrome of smallness. Our friendship with the people of this beautiful country often gets clouded by our basic inability to understand them. What they say should not offend, particularly when it is said by a small lunatic fringe. On the other hand, it should open the door for discussion, for understanding, and even for commercial integration and unity.

The author, a distinguished police officer who has retired from service, was a Special Secretary (Home). He was thereafter appointed a member of the National Police Commission set up during the tenure of the Janata Government at the Centre (1975-77).

In Pakistan hoodlums went on a rampage destroying Hindu temples while every sensible man and woman must have wondered what they would gain by this display of senseless vandalism, in which the ugliest feelings come out. It must have shown them that thinking people have no say. A few hoodlums can go berserk in mindless violence, and cause estrangement to our two nations. We have become hostage to hoodlums.

I would say that Amanullah Khan too is a crank, but let us give him credit for being a persistent crank. Years later we may say that it was men like him that brought the subcontinent to its sense, and showed the way to a confederation.

◆

A few rioters held the large city of Bombay to ransom, while millions cowered in their houses, unable to protest at the violence, unable to protect friends whom they had known since childhood from the howling gale of violence. It was only after the riot petered out that people said something must be done to stop such madness. While it was on, all sanity was surrendered to rumour and a streak of communalism that affected even the literate. Homes burnt, shops looted, brutal killings—is this the non-violence which was our *parmo dharma?* Now there is an attempt to keep Muslims away from their jobs. What effect this will have in the Gulf and other countries where millions of Indians are employed is never considered. In Auden's words, "Intellectual disgrace/stares from every face."

If the three nations of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh want to get out of the grip of violence and hatred, we have to build up our defences against the criminal who poses as a devout nationalist, expose the terrorist who wants to become a leader, and send the cranks who come out again and again to create misunderstandings to sweat it out in jails under detention. Ever since 1940 or so, our politics, our attitudes, our laws have made criminality lucrative, made the innocent pay the price of being in a minority. We have given

(Continued on page 34)

Recycling Intervention

NINAN KOSHY

In spite of a unilateral ceasefire declared by the Iraqi President on January 20, military activity by both the USA and Iraq has continued in northern and southern Iraq.

The new stage of US military action against Iraq began on January 13, just a few days before the end of the term of office of Bush as President. The reason given by the USA and its allies for the air raids in southern Iraq was that in spite of several warnings Iraq was continuing deployment of missiles in the 'no-fly zones'. The air raids began as an operation of the US-led coalition (including France and Great Britain) and was continued by the USA alone. Further raids by the US Air Force hit several civilian targets including the Al-Rashid hotel in Baghdad at a time when there were seven hundred guests in the hotel including many foreign journalists. The same day the US Air Force made a raid on a machine parts factory claiming it was a nuclear installation. The French Government openly criticised the US action and said that the US bombardment of Baghdad with cruise missiles overstepped the UN mandate. It is known that the UK also disapproved of the US action.

It is true that on January 11, the UN Security Council had given 'final notice' to Iraq regarding its recent violations of the UN resolution including a 'second incursion into Kuwait'. The UN Security Council statement said that the Iraqi incursions were a 'clear-cut defiance' of the UN resolution, and demanded an end to Iraq's ban on the UN-chartered aircraft which had halted weapons inspection and full Iraqi cooperation with the UN observers at the disputed border with Kuwait. The UN statement also called for the immediate return of silkworm and anti-ship missiles and other Iraqi military equipment removed from Kuwait during an incursion by two hundred Iraqis on January 10, material that was to have been destroyed by the UN inspectors. Iraq claimed that it had been agreed in advance with the UN that it would collect Iraqi-owned material before the new UN-defined border came into effect on January 15. While the UN denied this claim, apparently there was enough confusion at the UN headquarters on the matter not to follow up the issue.

The author, a former Director, International Affairs, World Council of Churches, was a Visiting Fellow, Human Rights Programme, Harvard Law School (1991-92).

However, what is significant to note is that the US military activity resumed in the region not in pursuance of any UN mandate but to enforce the 'no-fly zone' which was created by the allies and for which there was no mandate from the UN. This distinction is extremely important especially in the light of a subsequent endorsement of the US action on January 16 by the Secretary-General of the UN, Dr Boutros-Boutros Ghali. This was one more instance of the UN legitimising action by the USA, 'post-facto', a trend in the UN since the exit of the Soviet Union from the Security Council. The USA has been able to create the impression that challenging its actions was a challenge to the UN and thus a challenge to the international community. Even when it pursues its own policy objectives the USA pretends it is acting on behalf of the UN and on several occasions even when the Security Council has refrained from issuing ultimatums, it issues ultimatums in the name of the UN. This has been the case in the 'no-fly zone' affair.

The fact remains that no UN resolutions apply to the so-called 'no-fly zones' in southern Iraq and for that matter in northern Iraq. The US and its allies declared the zone in the south in August 1991, to prevent Iraqi military aircraft from attacking rebellious Shiite Muslims below the 32nd parallel. In creating the zone the US cited "extreme humanitarian" need under international law and Security Council Resolution 688 which demanded that the Iraqi Government should stop repression of its people. But there was neither UN endorsement nor UN authorisation for the 'no-fly zones'.

The Security Council Resolution 688 adopted in April 1991 was actually about the situation in northern Iraq in the aftermath of the revolt by the Kurds which was suppressed by the Iraqi Government. The resolution did not envisage or authorise any military action. But giving its own interpretation of the resolution, the coalition forces sent their troops to northern Iraq, created a 'safe haven' and imposed a 'no-fly zone'. This is how th[illegible] was imposed in northern Iraq. Presid[illegible] knew that he was acting at that time beyond the UN mandate. On April 16, 1991, Bush said:

> It may require a new resolution from the Security Council. And that is a complicated problem given the f[illegible]

> that some of the members who were steadfastly with us in the coalition might have problems about something of that nature.

There was no Security Council resolution on a 'no-fly zone' either in the north or the south.

A few comments may be made on the border incursions by Iraq into Kuwait. The border dispute between Iraq and Kuwait goes back to 1922, when a British colonial officer named Sir Percy Cox drew some lines in the desert. The Kuwait-Iraq border was then defined awarding the crucial area between the inner (red) and outer (green) lines of the Anglo-Ottoman Convention limiting Iraq's access to the Gulf to a mere 36 miles of the coastline infested with swamps and marshlands, thus denying it the possibility of a deep-water harbour and constraining its ability to become an important naval power in the region. Forty years later these boundaries were to be recognised afresh but his did not alter the fact that the Kuwait-Iraq frontiers were fixed originally by an imperial European power which controlled both territorial entities. The border dispute contributed substantially to the Gulf crisis of 1990 and subsequent invasion of Kuwait by Iraq.

In pursuance of the ceasefire resolution, the UN appointed a Border Commission. When the revisions in the border were announced by the UN last June, Iraq warned that they would 'create a permanent nucleus of tension in the region'. Iraq's unhappiness with the new border was not surprising since it meant giving up its only naval base at Umm Qasr and losing part of the al-Rumeilah oilfield. It is well-known that the new border is acceptable only to Kuwait. The rest of the Arab world and even the Opposition groups in Iraq feel that the UN has been unfair to Iraq. It is true that President Saddam challenged both the UN and the USA. The challenge to the UN was in the form of conditions regarding the flights of the UN weapons inspectors to Iraq. On this question Iraq withdrew its challenge very soon. Through the incursions in the new border, Iraq was once again registering its unhappiness about the UN revision of the border. The new border is a recipe for permanent hostility between the two countries, whoever comes to power in Iraq.

On the 'no-fly zones', Iraq wants to declare that it is illegal, that it has no basis in any UN resolutions and is hence unacceptable to Iraq. The provocation by Iraq was, therefore, with some rationale.

The timing of the Iraqi actions also was carefully chosen. The fact that the Bush Presidency was coming to an end was utilised by Saddam Hussein. While he could foresee Bush reacting by military force he knew that it would create problems for the new President, sow seeds of dissension among the coalition partners and highlight the double standards of the United Nations. If these were the motives of Saddam Hussein he has been to some extent successful.

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IN spite of repeated affirmations by President Clinton that he would continue Bush's policy on Iraq, it is evident that Clinton has doubts. Just before he assumed office he said that he was ready to see how Saddam Hussein behaved, but appeared to withdraw from that position, when questioned. It is undeniable that personal animostiy for Saddam Hussein clouded the judgement of President Bush and many others. Bush never thought that Saddam Hussein would be in power in 1993 and he himself would be out of power. In April 1991, Bush had given Saddam a maximum of one year in power (in a statement he made at a press conference). He not only pursued a policy of punishment against Saddam Hussein but he and Prime Minister John Major affirmed that sanctions against Iraq would continue as long as Saddam Hussein was in power. This new 'condition' which has no basis in the UN resolutions was added by John Major at a press conference in April 1991 after a meeting of the European Community Ministers. Will Presedent Clinton continue this policy?

In a way Saddam Hussein gave Bush an opportunity for the latter's 'swan song' to be in Iraq. Bush probably liked it, especially because it helped further divert Amercan attention from the Iran-Contra scandal at a time when more evidence of his involvement was coming to light. But his obsession with Iraq went beyond what even his allies had envisaged. So Clinton invariably is drawn into a process of rethinking the Iraqi policy, in spite of affirmation about continuity.

The new US action against Iraq has brought to the fore, with greater visibility, the double standards of the Western nations and the United Nations. The West is ready to punish the Iraqis but not the Serbs. Many questions are asked. Is the UN claiming that the Shiites in Iraq are in greater danger than the Muslims in Bosnia? What about the implementation of the UN Security Council resolution on the deportation of 400 Palestinians by Israel? Bahrein's *Akhbar al-Khalij* newspaper asked why it is always Iraq against which the UN resolutions have to be implemented while countless others on Palestine and Bosnia remain mere words on paper.

Behind the US imposition of 'no-fly zones' in northern and southern Iraq and the US policy of support to Iraqi Kurds and Shiites, there are designs for the disintegration of Iraq and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. They formed part of the policy of President Bush. It is yet to be seen whether this is the policy which President Clinton wants to follow.

Battle for India's Future

MUCHKUND DUBEY

A qualitative change was brought about on the Indian political scene on December 6, 1992, when a band of Hindu fanatics, in the presence of the leaders of an officially recognised political party and in the full knowledge of the government, was given all the time needed to reduce a historic mosque to rubble. In the process, they and their mentors violated the Indian Constitution, flouted the rule of law and perpetrated deception on the judiciary.

They demonstrated that they were not to be trusted to abide by the norms and rules of democracy, or to honour democratic institutions. The incident instilled a sense of shock and fear among the Muslim minority from which they may never recover. Fear, it may be emphasised, is the worst malady that can afflict an individual, a community or a society.

The Vice-President of India aptly desribed the Ayodhya incident as the greatest tragedy to have struck the country after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. When Gandhiji left us, we were orphaned. After Ayodhya, we have been dwarfed and diminished. One can rise after falling, but if diminished, it is difficult, if not impossible, to regain stature.

The perpetrators of Ayodhya indulged in the most ungodly act that can be conceived in the name of God. By demolishing the abode of Allah, they destroyed the abode of Ram as well. After all, did not Gandhiji teach us the prayer *Ishwar Allah Tere Naam?* Our scriptures say: *Ekah sadvipra bahudha vadanti* (There is only one God; the good Brahmins call Him by different names). It is immaterial whether or not *namaz* was being offered in the Babri Masjid. What made the fateful difference that day was the rude shock administered to those who had feelings for the mosque and the naked and brute display of hatred for this community by those who demolished it.

Ayodhya was not an isolated event. It was the most dramatic and ugly manifestation of the poison that has been spreading in the body politic of India. The process started more than 20 years ago when the Congress party, the votary of secularism, allowed ambiguities to creep into its practice of secularism, for political expediency. Other secular parties also made similar concessions. Only the Leftists remained by and large steadfast. But on an all-India basis, they have had a limited following and political clout.

All these years the saffron brigade or the *Sangh Parivar* has gone about carrying out its mission with an evangelist's zeal. It has been constantly on the offensive—fabricating lies, distorting facts, spreading outrageous rumours, turning history upside down—and misinterpreting the true tenets of Hinduism. They have hardly encountered any resistance from secular forces, which have generally remained passive, quiescent and smug. As a result, they have moved from the fringe to the centre of the political stage and have emerged from a marginal to a major political force.

The relentless march of the saffron brigade and what it accomplished in Ayodhya has put in jeopardy the very survival of India. Our ability to arrest and reverse this growing tide of Hindu communalism will determine the future of our country. Are we going to remain united or get further divided? Will we remain a democracy or drift into fascism? Will we be able to march confidently into the future or be hurtled back into the dark ages of history?

It is not possible to keep 120 million people cowed down or reverse the rights and status granted to them under the Indian Constitution. The fear and indignity heaped on them will assume vicious subterranean forms, including violence, terrorism, and even civil war. Unlike in Assam, Punjab and Kashmir, it will not remain confined to particular regions; it will spread all over the country.

It must also be noted that international thinking on human rights has reached a stage where a majority community simply will not be allowed to reduce its minorities to an inferior position. We need not be only worried about what the Muslim nations can or will do; we should have in mind what the nations who dominate the world order

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today, who call the tune in international relations, and who are out to apply the most rigorous tests of the observance of human rights internationally think of us. Thus, even if India so decides, it no longer enjoys untrammelled sovereignty to convert itself into a *Hindu Rashtra*. It is useful to remember that the US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in his confirmation hearing that one of the endeavours of the new Administration will be to "remove threats to Indian democracy through communal strife".

◆

THE saffron brigade by its rash and unthinking action has been instrumental not only in triggering the worst kind of communal riots in the country since the partition, but also in bringing death and destruction to the Hindus and other minorities in neighbouring Pakistan and Bangladesh and in the more distant lands of the UK and South Africa. The post-Ayodhya happenings in these countries have demonstrated that communalism begets communalism—both nationally and internationally. The liberal and rational forces in these countries—people who are fighting for a pluralistic society—have suffered a serious setback. They have seen years of effort go in vain. They are lying low before the fundamentalist forces which have received a shot in the arm as they are helplessly watching the situation in India, hoping that the miracle of the full revival of secularism will take place.

India's international prestige has suffered a grievous blow after Ayodhya. A large part of the prestige it enjoyed internationally was due to its moral stature of which secularism was the most important component. After Ayodhya—and particularly because of the manner the government has so far handled the situation—the world is no longer going to take it seriously in its profession of secularism. Indian diplomats abroad will no longer be able to talk about Indian secularism with any degree of conviction because they know that the government and political leaders routinely indulge in equivocation.

More than six weeks after Ayodhya, there is little evidence of the secularist forces putting up a joint fight against the communalism of the saffron brigade. The so-called secular political parties are divided both among themselves and within. They are still assailed by doubt and hesitation. They continue to be moved by consideration of tactics and political expediency. Their leaders are seeking a level field to pursue personal political ambitions and they seem to be longing for the status quo.

But they should realise that the status quo has been irrevocably altered after Ayodhya. The saffron brigade has thrown down the gauntlet. It has no regrets for what it has done. Ayodhya is but a part of its strategy of realising its tortured dream of a *Hindu Rashtra;* it is but a stop in its journey of realising the final goal.

Let us not be lulled by the cosy comfort of the status quo. If we opt for it, we will soon find ourselves transformed into a different nation altogether—a nation that is deeply divided, a nation that is wilfully destroying its destiny. A concerted move against these communalist forces cannot be postponed because every day that passes in passivity emboldens them and makes them stronger.

The saffron brigade is well-disciplined and driven by an aggressive ideology. It is an illusion to believe that it will admit of any moderation in the single-minded pursuit of its objective. There is, therefore, no scope for compromise when the choice is between good and evil, between truth and untruth. There is no way but to take them on headlong. They must be depicted before the nation as a pernicious force which has no saving grace, no redeeming features. In this battle, it is immoral for anyone to sit on the fence.

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A concerted and conscious effort has to be made to project secularism as a positive social value. It has to be explained that secularism is not a choice but an absolute necessity for holding together a country of India's diversity and size. The only way to keep India united is to give to all its citizens, irrespective of the religion and creed they follow, a status of equality in all respects.

Secularism as practised and preached by the leaders of our independence movement and as enshrined in the Indian Constitution, is neither a Godless creed nor an ideology imported from abroad. There have been very few persons as close to God as Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest proponent of Indian secularism. Moreover, far from being a foreign import, secularism is an integral part of the mainstream of the Indian philosophical and social thinking, flowing through the early Upanishads, Budddhism, Jainism, the teachings of Kabir, Nanak and other luminaries of the Bhakti and Sufi movements, and the writings of the leaders of modern Indian renaissance—Vivekananda, Raja

Rammohun Roy, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi.

Secularism proclaims the essential unity and equality of humankind brought about by the omnipresence of the Divine. This notion is present in all religions, but is the core of Hinduism. It is also in keeping with the spirit of modern times. Only a social order based on secularism is capable of coping with the challenges of modern times—of technology and enterprise, and of human rights and democracy.

A modern nation's concern is its place in the world politics and economy, its competitiveness in the world market and its role in the shaping of the emerging world order. On the top of India's national agenda are: threats to its security, its nuclear option, the issues of Kashmir and Punjab which threaten its national unity, upgrading the technological level of the economy, attracting foreign private capital, seeking markets abroad and, in order to achieve these goals, projecting an image of a politically stable India.

Instead of addressing these priorities, the nation finds itself embroiled in a series of phoney issues or non-issues raised by the Hindu chauvinists, like the Tin Bigha, Bangladeshi migrants, singing of *Vande Mataram* and Ayodhya. If we continue in this mode, we will be missing the historical opportunity of building a strong and modern India.

The proponents of *Hindutva* should understand that *Hindutva* derives its glory only from the glory of India. If India falls, there will be very little respect left for *Hindutva* either. India's glory in the past was never based on religious conquests or its being a *Hindu Rashtra*, but on its message of compassion and tolerance, on its unique synthesizing abilities and on the successful exploitation of its abundant resources. It was not *Hindutva* but these values and riches that drew outsiders to India.

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THE message of secularism should be taken to every home, every hamlet, every taluk and every district. For this purpose, the secular political parties should fully deploy their cadres. Those which do not have or have lost their cadres should take advantage of this opportunity to build them. The task is nothing short of matching the well-organised and disciplined cadres of the *Sangh Parivar*. Since most of the secular political parties are without any worthwhile cadres, students, teachers and NGOs should strive to fill in the void. In the face of the threatened BJP onslaught on the so-called Bangladeshi Muslims in Okhla, they demonstrated how effective they can be.

But that was a defensive action; now they must go on the offensive. One of the first tasks in this offensive should be to nail the lies being dished out day in and day out by the *Sangh Parivar*.

They say that Indian Muslims are disloyal; that they are getting enormous resources from abroad; that they are awash with arms supplied from abroad; that every day new mosques are coming up in the country, built with foreign money; that ever since independence the Muslims have been pampered in all possible ways; that the Muslims start all the riots; that because of the prevalence of Muslim personal laws of marriage and bearing children, the Muslim population has been increasing at a faster pace than the Hindu population; and all the lurid and exaggerated stories of the temples destroyed and atrocities committed by Muslims in the riots.

It goes without saying that none of these allegations can stand the scrutiny of fact. What is really frightening is that they are Goebblesian in character. They must be systematically exposed and buried. Both written and visual media should be fully deployed for the purpose. The existing curricula should be revised and new curricula introduced to carry the new message of secularism. Encouragement should be given to the creation of different art forms to convey the same message. The genius of eminent historians, philosophers, authors, poets and artists should be enlisted to this end. We have to wage a war in the mind and soul of the people.

The singlemost important action to restore the confidence of our Muslims is to start rebuilding the mosque without further delay. The Islamic countries all over the world have also taken this to be the of India most tangible test of the intention of the Government and the nation to protect the Muslim minority and to remove the pall of fear that has decended upon them. When, in the wake of the Ayodhya incident, the Prime Minister announced that the mosque would be rebuilt, the expectation everywhere, except those who were shceming otherwise, was that it would be built at the same place where it stood before the demolition.

Only after the government started prevaricating and equivocating did we witness the surfacing of all kinds of disingenious and seemingly original

(Continued on page 26)

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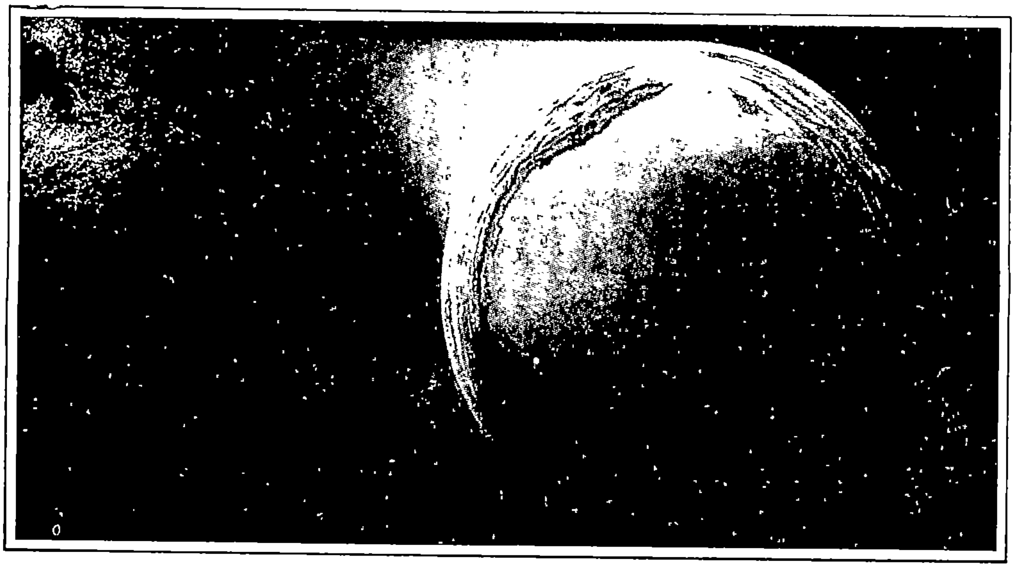

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IEEMA Memorandum: A Critique

HARBIR SINGH SIDHU

The Indian Electrical and Electronics Manufacturers' Association (IEEMA) has submitted a Memorandum to the Ministry of Finance on the Rationalisation of Customs and Central Excise Duties. Apart from specific insights and recommendations about broad product specifications as well as about the range of small scale projects of national importance, the Memorandum proposes a so-called new system of tax called the "Modcus System". The Memorandum claims parentage for this system from the "Modvat System" which is supposedly derived from the "Vat System". However, neither did the Modvat System descend from the tenets of the Vat System nor has Modcus a logical affinity for either of the two other systems. It is, of course, true that the operation of all the three systems is similar inasmuch as fresh levies are charged at each stage and duties paid at the prior stage are credited, thus avoiding cascading duties and also allowing for specialisation and competition at intermediate stages of protection.

In short, the Vat, or Value Added Tax, as introduced largely in European countries, spreads the indirect taxes uniformly over all forms of economic activity whether it be manufacturing a car or selling bread and milk at a grocery store. The calculation and levying of this tax is made relatively simple by the logic that the price of any product consists of the price of inputs at that stage together with the value added at that very point of time. Taking the argument one step further, we see that the inputs are merely outputs of another stage and so on. Thus, one can show that the final price of a product is really the value added by the economy. The levying system is also made universal and all-pervasive by having a common rate of tax applicable to all sales with a set-off available for tax paid on inputs. The major advantages of this system are its relative simplicity and pervasiveness which ensures virtually complete compliance. However, this strength is derived largely from the single rate and universal applicability which is not seen to be feasible in India because

(i) the single rate taxes capital inputs and labour inputs equally and at least so far the Government of India has been loathe to tax labour intensive industries; and
(ii) with disguised unemployment and informal hawkers, artisans and other self-employeds being such a large percentage of the Indian economy, universal applicability of the tax-net would remain a far cry from reality in the near future.

The author, a consultant economist, was a consultant with the Planning Commission and taught at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

The Modvat System as used in India has accepted neither of the two tenets of the Vat System but has followed a similar calculation/application of Excise Duty so that

(a) cascading effects are removed through credits for duty paid;
(b) rationalisation of production amongst different producers can be achieved without increasing the number of stages of cumulative taxation; and
(c) artificial and inefficient agglomerations do not occur merely to avoid the multiplicity of taxation stages without concomitant economies of scale.

The Modvat System is a first step in the rationalisation process and further progress in this regard is not independent of the structural changes that the Indian economy requires.

The Modcus System as proposed in this Memorandum has not looked at the logic and rationality of the taxation policy under welfare terms, but merely as a revenue gathering system. Of course, bad governments reduce taxation through a revenue gathering system but when new systems are being proposed, it is expected that both the practical and theoretical aspects of the problem would be analysed prior to implementing a new scheme.

Briefly, the Modcus System envisages credit for the Customs Duty paid out on inputs at the time of levying Excise Duty on outputs produced by any unit. Logically speaking, Customs Duty should be levied, at least partly, to compensate the domestic producers for the taxes and other governmental cesses that they have to pay and that the exporter from the other country is free from. The other reasons for Customs Duties are to encourage domestic production by giving it protection from international competition and also to act as a second tier for currency parity adjustments. The Modcus argument derives its logic only from the former component of Customs Duty.

So far so good, but logical development of the concept ceases hereafter as per the Memorandum.

In fact Countervailing Duties levied in addition to basic Customs Duty for some items is essentially for balancing the incidence of Excise Duty on domestic competitors. The Memorandum also admits that Countervailing Duties are given credit under the Modvat System. Hence, logically nothing is left to defend the Modcus System. The other advantages claimed on behalf of the Modcus System are not derived from the Modcus System but really from rationalisation and lower rates leading to better implementation of tax laws.

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DESITE the theoretical weaknesses and surface-thin treatment of some very important issues, the Memorandum has a highly significant strength. I find that the solutions offered and suggested have not emerged from the logic as explained—it appears an afterthought and window-dressing at best—but have emerged from the collective wisdom of practical businessmen who are enlightened and intelligent beings. I believe that the Ministry of Finance and the Chelliah Committee will view the recommendations and suggestions independent of the logic put forward, because I could personally find a more rigorous line of defence than the one put forward in the Memorandum but the results desired from the theoretical postulates put up by a person like me would not be as reliable as what emerges as market industry wisdom and opinion.

In this light, I wish the trade associations of the country would take an active interest in the issues facing our country, as the IEEMA has done but concentrate more on the specific problems relating to their industry about which their knowledge level is, to put it simply, definitive and vastly in excess of the half knowledge with the mandarins of the Finance Ministry or even the Ministry dealing with production. The government bodies should have enough humility to recognise this. Then alone can we hope for a meaningful dialogue in mutuality between the Government and Industry rather than the antagonistic positions that have been the norm for the past few decades.

There is, however, a tendency among associations to avoid talking about internal matters to outside bodies and this position becomes even worse when a trade association has amongst its members both importers and domestic producers, small scale and large scale producers and similar heterogenous groups. Naturally, a unified voice cannot be given on issues such as differentials in Excise Duty for small scale and protection for the domestic producer through high tariffs from such a group. I may add that the mix of members of an association is not a figment of my imagination but rather the norm for such bodies in India; hence the problem in finding a coherent voice by a trade association. These are understandable problems but it should also be clear that until private trade and industry can evolve a meaningful internal consensus, they will never be able to influence government thinking significantly.

Suggestions recommending the reduction of Customs Duties for "my" inputs and protection through high duties for "my" output is the norm that one finds in all memoranda of this type. Rationalisation is made the rhetoric and then neatly sidestepped by asking for protection. Rationalisation can only lead to transparency and uniformity based on objective criteria of taxation that will be virtually universally applied so that global trade based on comparative advantage becomes a reality. The unification of Europe is a striking indicator of the importance of this inasmuch as nations which have had histories of border disputes and wars as bloody and long as India and Pakistan have come voluntarily together under common economic policies and given up their individual sovereignty to that extent.

Growth and maturity are pleasant-sounding words but they have a dose of bitter medicine related to them and it is time that our country and its various components such as trade associations look into their souls and face upto the challenges ahead. The heyday of protecting industry is over and there is a groundswell in favour of protecting the consumer. The trade associations would do well to take heed and search out methods for restructuring their industries such that they become cost-effective and internationally competitive rather than merely paying lip-service to these words. ■

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Lobbies and the Budget: A Quick Case-Study

KAMAL NAYAN KABRA

The liberalised policy regime attempting to make private business the leaders of growth amounts to an open aknowledgement of a change in the stance and character of this state. The government would no longer suffer from a sense of shame in doing open and symbiotic dealings with business houses. The question of qualms of conscience was unlikely to have arisen even on earlier occasions as the basic sympathies for and identification with the business classes have never been in question.

Therefore, it is little wonder that the memoranda submitted by business houses and associations are no longer confidential. In fact, now some of them are printed documents and find fairly wide circulation. These memoranda deserve attention. For one thing, they provide a touchstone for examining the contention whether government is business and business is government. What kind of corporatist state is emerging and how far can one apply the prefix 'social' to it, are important questions.

Then, it is often maintained that Indian business is all for opening up and globalisation. These memoranda can provide some clues for judging this issue. From the point of one's understanding of the policy processes, the detailed recommendations and suggestions emanating from industry and trade are of critical value. Since the complexity of industrial organisations is increasing and their interdependence is growing, specific methods of imposing taxes and duties, *inter se* relationship between various elements of the tax structure, the choice of nomenclature, the manner in which exemptions, concessions and special provisions are worded go a long way in determining the effectiveness, impact and possibilities and extent of tax compliance. Since our bureaucracy has hardly an exposure to the complexities of modern industrial structures, memoranda based on detailed homework done by the managers of industry regarding duty differentials, classifications, definitions, exemptions, assessment and collection procedures do have the potential of sweeping the bureaucrats off their feet and/or taking them for a ride. But a careful examination of these without looking for avenues of subjective discretion can be helpful as well.

The author is a Professor of Economics in the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi.

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THE liberalisation package, despite the sponsorship it is receving from the IMF-World Bank combine, has many of its specific details undefined. This gives a lot of space to interested parties to press forward with their sectional agendas. Recently one has come across a memorandum of this genre entitled "Rationalisation of Customs and Central Excise Duties", which has been submitted to the Ministry of Finance by the Indian Electrical and Electronics Manufacturers' Association (IEEMA).

It is notable for its wide sweep, which goes beyond the direct matters of concern to the industry in question. It may be noted that this industry has been one of the leading industries of the 1980s and with its double digit growth rate helped push up the overall rate of growth of manufacturing to eight to nine per cent per annum. It is also an industry with heavy import-intensity to which the charge of screw-driver technology (notwithstanding its being a sunrise industry) strikes quite easily.

The Memorandum shows that Indian industry has not gone the whole hog with uncritical total acceptance of opening up and globalisation. Protection of domestic capacities has not become a dirty word with it. It says:

> Even nations which are pressuring developing countries for adoption of free economy themselves give *clear protection and sometimes, even excess protection* to certain sectors of economy in their own country. A developing country like India cannot expose its growing industry totally to global competition where competitors would have certain built-in advantages. Therefore, *certain level of protection is also essential.* (p. 2; emphasis added)

The irony is that in the tradition of being more loyal than the king, our politicians and mandarins are singing the borrowed tunes full-throatedly. This was illustrated recently when proposing a vote of thanks to a newly inducted Cabinet Minister to an important economic ministry, the FICCI President was wondering if he was listening to some former chief of his own outfit!

How uncritically the Ministry of Finance accepts the pleas by trade and industry is shown in this Memorandum itself. Referring to the Memorandum the Association submitted last year, it is said that "unfortunately the Hon'ble Finance Minister duly reduced highest level of total customs duty (basic + auxiliary). No attempt at rationalisation was made." And then it says with emphasis:

> We wish to emphasise that *only reduction in customs duties is not equivalent to rationalisation of customs duty*. (emphasis in the original)

The Memorandum has the courage to oppose the privilege of duty-free imports by VIPs and diplomats. This is a totally anachronistic, anti-*swadeshi* and anti-austerity position. The sooner it is done away with the better.

The Memorandum also exposes the naivete in giving duty-concessions to "so-called fuel/energy efficient machines". "This is so," the Memorandum goes on to explain, "since it will be impossible to determine whether all machines produced will have the same fuel efficiency as the prototype." One knows that a large number of such provisions pass on unspecified amounts of subsidies on dubious grounds to articulate and well-connected interests. If any product is fuel-efficient, its running costs will save so much that anyone will prefer to pay a five or 10 per cent duty. This proposition may broadly be generalised to eliminate a large number of such concessions which open up the floodgates of avoidance without any palpable gains.

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While the position that those who use foreign exchange earned through exports for status symbols, luxury personal consumption goods, should be made to pay high duty, the level of 50 to 60 per cent *advalorem* suggested is hardly commensurate with the high social opportunity cost entailed by such imports. Basically such duties should approach prohibitive levels.

Given the over-enthusiasm over the 'globalisation' package, it is rightly emphasised that "any exemptions in import duty structure should not place imports at an advantageous position *vis-a-vis* indigenously produced equivalent materials". Perils of excessive rate differences, like misclassification, misdeclaration, different rates for the same product, etc. to evade the duties have also been highlighted.

Many different rates of duties are applied on the basis of the product being an intermediate or a final product. The Memorandum correctly argues that "it is impossible and undesirable to prescribe norms when a given product should receive treatment as a raw-material or as an intermediate product or as a finished product for levying duty under a three-tier structure". Any such prescription will also lead to "centre of decision-making corruptions". Hence its plea for a unique rate of duty for a given product. That such discretionary, detailed controls, regulations and concessions led to massive misuse of authority in the past and defeated the stated objectives of public policy, makes for simple, objective and realistic rate structure of duties serving both revenue and protection purposes. It is doubtful how far taxes can be used for altering resource allocation. Given the complex set of factors affecting resource use, it is important that only very careful tinkering through taxes/subsidies is attempted in cases where at the margin the tax imposts can be believed to tilt the balance.

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SOME of these valid recommendations canvassed by the Memorandum seem to arrive basically from the industry's unstated apprehension based on past experience that given the powerful global pressures and the strident ideological fervour with which our politicians, even given their former non-political, academic past, have jumped the bandwagon, many unthinking liberalising excesses are likely to be committed. Hence their detailed homework and the plea for "adequate protection to efficient and viable indigenous industry".

However, narrow sectional interests are bound to assert themselves. This is what the trade associations are about. This can be seen in many proposals and propositions. The case for continuing the disproportionate emphasis on indirect taxes, neglect or underplaying of numerous routes for non-compliance with indirect tax laws, blaming tax rates rather than the political economy of the time for "evasion, corruption and the worsts", a blanket case for an unrealistic ceiling on rates of duty, neglect of the limitations of VAT, MODVAT and their various incarnations, appear to be based more on narrow sectional interests than on the stated factors. The revenue needs and the case for imposing differential tax burdens on different sections seem to be greatly neglected in the otherwise sound case for simplified tax structure. The basic weakness lies in endorsing the supply-side proposition that lower taxes may yield larger revenue through enhanced economic activity. Since they agree that the "taxation structure cannot be held responsible for a unit being inefficient" (p.11), there is hardly any basis for putting excessive blame on the taxes being so high as to discourage economic activities like investment, capacity utilisation, etc.

The recommendations regarding the SSI sector, though not totally sectarian, tend to be self-contradictory and narrow-minded. It is admitted that the larger units controlled by "wealthy manufacturers" avail of these concessions meant for the small sector in many diverse ways, most of them illegal and based on wrong laws. It is hardly fair to suspect that these concessions have been crippling large industries. The suggestion that concessions should be linked to turnover is an improvement over the existing investment-linked concessions. However, the social objectives cannot be served without forging an additional link with a number of employees. Reduction of duty concession differential to a mere five per cent level is hardly adequate.

In sum, it can be said that both the Finance Ministry and fiscal experts may usefully examine the Memorandum as a little more than pure and unabashed lobbying, since some larger concerns are clearly reflected in it. Reasonably competent home-work and technical expertise of the Memorandum may prove useful to the discernible policy-makers who have not been swept off their feet by the strong ideological storms of the day. ■

"...there is no use of crying over the spilt milk; the point is, it may be argued, to deal with the present and the future. But are the two things—review of the past, deciding the present and planning the future—so opposed to each other? I would...humbly plead that the economic and political crisis through which the country has been passing...and is passing today should be traced to the past—the class character of the bourgeois leadership which stood at the head of the freedom movement."

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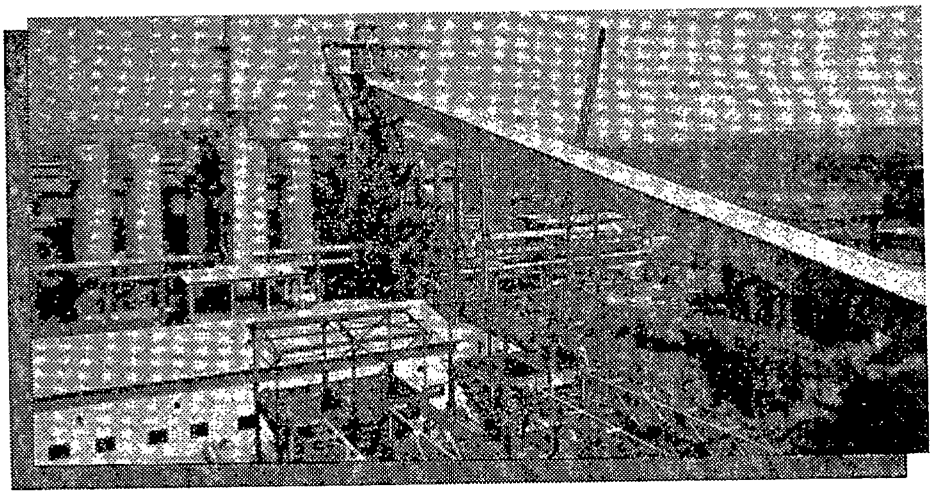

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In Memory of Punjab Revolutionaries (1914-15)

RANDHIR SINGH

The author, one of the most successful teachers in Delhi University as a Professor of Political Theory, has now retired from the University. This article is a translation of the author's address at a cultural-cum-political festival, Babean da Mela, *in memory of the martyrs and heroes of the Ghadarite uprising of 1914-15, organised by Desh Bhagat Yadgar Committee at Jalandhar (Punjab) on September 26 and 27, 1992.*

—Editor

This festival in memory of the martyrs and heroes of the Ghadar movement and the uprising of 1914-15 is like a breath of fresh air in the frighteningly musty and polluted atomosphere of life and politics in Punjab or for that matter elsewhere in the country today. As a child I had heard of these men, they were spoken of with deep awe and respect in our home. And if Bhagat Singh's was soon a compelling presence for me, I also learnt that *his* hero was Kartar Singh Sarabha, the youthful leader of the uprising which failed; for Bhagat Singh, Kartar Singh Sarabha was indeed a model revolutionary. Later, after 1939, when I came into the Communist Party at Lahore, I had the opportunity to work with the legendary survivors of this uprising and its other successors in the Ghadar movement, who had in the meantime, almost naturally, moved on to Marxism and revolutionary socialism in their search for an answer to the problems of their country. Baba Bhagat Singh Bilga, our chairman at this session, was a senior comrade.

A rare privilege for me was the savouring of life and politics of Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna and, somewhat later, of Baba Gurmukh Singh, my proposed work on whose biography was, like so much else, soon disrupted by the tragic partition of the country in 1947. Out of these contacts, especially with the former, came a small fragment of writing: *The Ghadar Heroes—Forgotten Story of the Punjab Revolutionaries of 1914-15.* Published in 1945, it was perhaps the first such writing in the English language. It was soon translated into other major Indian languages.

For me, coming to participate in this festival is like a pilgrimage—the revolutionary ambience of the occasion restores its true meaning to this word—today much debased by the dominant ruling class politics and culture in our country. I see around me in this memorial building so many reminders of a movement whose revolutionary heroism, quality and sweep of martyrdom, and continuity of struggle and sacrifice can rival any other in the annals of the world revolutionary process. Among these reminders is the magnificent gallery of portraits, the strong and proud faces of the insurgents from all communities, even if mostly Sikhs, and from all parts of India, even if mostly Punjabis—men who competed with each other to defy death and mount the gallows with a smile, spent long, very long years, the best years of their life, in prisons of India and the Andamans, in solitary confinement and iron cages, chained to walls and ever in handcuffs, bars and fetters, and subjected to every conceivable torture, men who yet never gave in—bleeding but dignified, they suffered but fought on. And once out of their prisons, unbroken and unbowed, they rejoined the battle and carried on the same way, openly or underground, in prisons again or outside, till 1947—and, I must add, to the very end, after 1947 too, after India became free and passed into the hands of new, now Indian, rulers!

What vision these revolutionaries had, what giants of human beings they were in their life-long commitment to the cause of the Indian people. Contrast with the myopic pigmies who have today inherited this country is only too starkly obvious. And this does not preclude those of the Left who claim or are supposed to be their rightful heirs. This long-suffering land of ours, much too tired today, does not produce this breed of men any more. But our people need to remember and recover their revolutionary tradition and be worthy of it if they would reclaim this country for themselves, in Punjab or elsewhere.

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EARLIER in the session there were efforts to 'analyse and sum up' the phenomenon that was the Ghadar movement. This is as it should be. I will, however, add that an excessive concern with 'summing up' may still be somewhat misplaced for this is best in order when a movement has either won or lost out finally. To me, while the Ghadar movement certainly has not won, it has not finally lost out either—its struggle is still very much on. A critical, historical look at the movement, a going over the past, needs to have as its main purpose, not 'a final summing up' but a recovery of necessary lessons, of its essential meaning and inspiration for a more effective prosecution of the struggle today.

Again, there were laudable, almost inevitable, exercises to recognise and emphasise 'Ghadar Party's contribution to India's freedom'. Inevitable, because in this its Golden Jubilee year, the 'Quit India' movement is supposed to have won freedom for India and a competitive chipping in of claims is on. The Congressite sections of the Indian ruling classes, faced with the increasing loss of their legitimacy and desperately looking for it anywhere and everywhere—from communalism to 'Quit India'—have been busy building a mythology around the latter as the event that gave India its freedom, which is simply not true. The 'Quit India' movement certainly undermined the British rule in India as did, and far more effectively, the earlier revolutionary movements including the Ghadar movement, and the later revolutionary developments on the eve of the Indian independence, long after the few months old 'Quit India' movement had been well taken care of by the British rulers. In any case, in a long-term perspective, there is no denying the historic contribution of the Ghadar movement to India's struggle for freedom. But today, 45 years later, perhaps there is need to take notice of, not what happened in 1947 but what did not happen and *its* consequences, namely, a revolutionary overthrow of the British rule in India that the Ghadarites had sought. The more important question today is that the freedom which came in 1947, through a compromise and settlement with British imperialism, was not the freedom that the Ghadarite revolutionaries had fought for. *That* freedom still remains to be won for the Indian people.

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MORE interesting than these two issues is another which, though it came up only for a brief reference here, is commonly raised in academic discourses on the subject. A 'scholarly' or 'scientific' attitude apropos the Ghadarite revolutionaries and their attempted uprising often speaks, even if a trifle patronisingly, of such things as 'lack of theory' and 'unsound grasp' of historical situation, of circumstances as 'unripe' and armed action as 'inappropriate', of a certain 'peasantness' and 'petty bourgeois romanticism' where, as against 'reason', 'emotions and sentiments' take over one's politics, etc., etc.

This attitude towards revolutionary movements, especially when they are seen to be unsuccessful in their immediate aims, is quite widespread, and it is likely to grow among scholars now that the 'crisis of socialism' has added to the odds against such movements. It seems to me that in this matter scholars generally betray a singular inability to comprehend or appreciate what is central to revolutionary politics—the commitment and idealism of the revolutionaries. Conformity to the dominant mores of their society and an academic orientation with its empiricistic concern with the measurable and quantifiable, tends to make these scholars rather insensitive to the intangibles that define and govern the lucidity of life and action of the revolutionaries—a certain passion and moral fervour, absolute anger and hostility towards the wrongs of society, its iniquities and injustices, and towards their perpetrators, the powerful moral and emotional charge to the 'dream' they cherish which makes the revolutionaries what they are, and drives them to surpass themselves, to achieve, regardless of the cost of themselves—in defeat as much as in victory—what is normally seen to be impossible. Scholars simply fail to recognise that 'wise men', men of 'reason' and cold calculations, loaded with 'soundness' and 'scientific theories', but without dreams, don't make a revolution. It is those others, the men and women of revolutionary idealism and with dreams, dreams born of reality but dreams nevertheless, who do. It is this truly human and alive, death-defying *realism* that makes the revolutionaries attempt the impossible, that is, make a revolution.

Finding it difficult to comprehend this, most scholars, with the wisdom of hindsight, are generally more comfortable with 'explanation' and 'interpretation', with mundane 'summings up' of revolutionary movements, supplementing their poverty of theory and lack of imagination with plodding research that passes for scholarship in our institutions of higher learning. Some among them, especially those with an 'ex-Communist's conscience', ever in search of self-justification, even seem to be happy with such movements' failures, 'explaining' and 'analysing' them, and profitably wrapping them up for their own Ph.D. degrees and the greater glory of others, 'the successful' of history, providing them with the much-needed assurance, with scholarly support and legitimacy. Recent research on the Communist Left in India provides quite a few examples. Nothing succeeds like success, in history and for a certain kind of scholar!

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AN additional point will not be out of place for this audience. Relevant here, maybe it needs to be made even otherwise. The Ghadarite revolutionaries even as they, in their continuing concern for the interest of the Indian people, made a transition to the revolutionary socialism of Karl Marx, did so all the more naturally because they saw or sensed in him a kindred spirit, 'a fighter'. As Engels put it:

> Marx was before all else a revolutionist...Fighting was his element. And he fought with a passion, a tenacity, and a success such as few could rival.

It is only this fighter's commitment to socialist revolution that Marx made early in his life, and a moral passion that goes with it, which enables us to make sense of his life—a life full of all the trials and hazards of the life of a revolutionary, its political defeats, factional struggles and repeatedly dashed hopes as well as years of personal poverty and privations, 'the humiliations, torments and terrors', the '*petite miseres*' (petty wretchedness), as Marx himself put it, of the struggle for sheer physical survival that did grave damage to his wife's health and his own and were a contributory cause of the death of a daughter and two sons; years when he had no money to pay rent or buy medicine or even a coffin for a dead child, when his daughters were out of school because their winter shoes were with the pawn-broker, when for days the family fed on bread and potatoes and at times even these were not available... And all this while Marx refused those other easily available 'soft options'. This life is simply inexplicable in terms of conventional scholarship, of 'science' or 'reason' or any 'theory of historical development', of some 'pure logic'. It had an altogether different logic to it, one which underlay all of Marx's theoretical work and his life-long struggle, the logic of a revolutionary commitment, of the conscious, clear-eyed choice Marx had made in the fight between the people and those who oppress and exploit them. And he had chosen to stand by the people.

This choice was for Marx, as it has always been for revolutionaries, simply taking of sides in an ongoing class war. It was not a matter of any scientific or historical analysis, knowledge of 'laws' or 'stages' or any other 'inevitabilities' of history, or 'predictions' about the future, etc. On the contrary, it entailed a seemingly 'romantic' but necessary boldness in pursuit of revolutionary possibilities. That is how, for exmple, even as Marx foresaw (in *Communist Manifesto*) the coming 'bourgeois revolution' in Germany he also saw it as 'the prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution'. And when this 'bourgeois revolution' indeed occurred, he proclaimed it 'our interest and our task' to seek 'to make the revolution permanent...until the proletariat has conquered state power'. Marx failed in Germany, but seventy years later, exactly as Marx had wanted, Lenin succeeded in Russia, though, I must add, to fail again, through unworthy successors, seventy years later. Such success or failure in struggle, in the epochal process of transition to socialism, however, is not my concern at the moment. The issue here is the commitment and conduct of Marx as a revolutionary, which for Marx also entailed contempt for the philistines who, as he wrote to an old friend, 'consider people like you and me as immature fools who all this time have not been cured of their revolutionary fantasies'.

To the very end, let it be clearly stated, Marx's sympathies always lay with fighters and revolutionaries whatever be the 'small print' of their creeds, as Shanin has put it. Marx had only scorn for the 'know-all' types, the doctrinaire theorisers, including the Marxists, his own followers, when on scientific or theoretical grounds they questioned, criticised or rebuked revolutionary struggle.

We know that Marx had tried to persuade the workers of Paris, for good reasons, not to venture on a revolution. But once they did so he hailed them for 'storming heavens' and stood up magnificently in defence of the Paris Communards against their enemies and calumniators. Again, even as he persistently warned against utopianism and Blanquism in the movement, he was scornfully dismissive of socialists within his own party in Germany who 'keep themselves within the limits of the logically presumable and of the permissible by the police'. Yet again, when the issue was joined between, on the one hand, the revolutionaries of the People's Will—the indigenous revolutionary organisation of his times in Russia, remembered for its insurrectionary politics and heroic defiance of the Czarist state—who postulated an immediate Russian revolution and the possibility of 'revolutionary leaps' which may ensure Russia 'bypassing the stage' of capitalism on its way to a just society; and, on the other, Marx's own 'disciples' in Russia—Plekhanov and others—whose strictly evolutionist Marxism saw history as constituted by necessary stages and postulated the necessity of a capitalist stage in Russia's advance to socialism and, therefore, criticised the populist revolutionaries in the name of Marxism and scientific socialism, Marx came down loud and clear on the side of the revolutionaries of the People's Will. He found these revolutionaries on trial for life not only right in the essentials of their stand but 'simple, objective, heroic'. Theirs was, Marx wrote, 'not tyrannicide as "theory" and "panacea" but a lesson to Europe in a "specifically" Russian historically inevitable mode of action; against which any moralising from a safe distance was offensive'.

Marx always spoke admiringly of human qualities of these revolutionaries and to the end he and Engels consistently referred to them as 'our friends'. In contrast, Marx spoke of the 'boring doctrines' of his evolutionist disciples and referred to them derisively as 'Russian capitalism admirers'—a political position which needs to be taken note of by our own 'Indian capitalism admirers', Marxist and other Leftist apologists for 'progressive', 'independent' or 'self-reliant' capitalism, who, additionally, so interpret historical processes in India as to go soft on the ruling classes to the point of rallying behind them in the name of Marxism or socialism. (Incidentally, later on, Lenin too seems to have shared Marx's deviation on the Russian question. During and after the 1905-07 revolution, he was accused of leaning towards populism, that is, the Russian revolutionaries, by some of his associates and adversaries.)

In a brief but brilliant exploration of the life and work of the late Marx, drawing our attention to this particular aspect of Marx as a revolutionary and to a certain scientistic interpretation of Marxism, Teodor Shanin writes:

> It has been the way of many sophisticates of Marxology to scoff at such utterances of Marx or to interpret them patronisingly as 'determined rather by...emtional motives' (an antonym, no doubt, of 'analytical', 'scientific' or 'sound'). To understand political action, especially the struggle for a socialist transformation of humanity, as an exercise in logic or as a programme of factory building only, is utterly to misconstrue it, as Marx knew well. Also, he shared with the Russian revolutionaries the belief in the purifying power of revolutionary action in transforming the very nature of those involved in it—the 'educating of the educators'. The Russian revolutionary populists' concern with moral issues found ready response in him. Moral emotions apart (and they were there and unashamedly expressed), revolutionary ethics were often as central as historiography to Marx's political judgement. So was Marx's distaste of those to whom the punch-line of Marxist analysis was the adoration or elaboration of irresistible laws of history, used as the license to do nothing.

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LET me now turn to the substantive *political* issue. Men of the Ghadar Party were revolutionaries par excellence. Secular and democratic to the core, patriotic in the best sense of the word, they were nationalists committed to insurrectionary politics, to a revolutionary overthrow of the British rule in India, which they saw as a first step for India on its way to a just society. As expressed in the Ghadarite poetry and literature, they visualised this society as free from exploitation and oppression, a society of equality, fraternity and social justice for its citizens. It is this vision precisely which makes their later transition to Marx's revolutionary socialism an almost natural progress. Whatever the inadequacies of their theory and practice—and there were many as we now know them in the light of our experience with and knowledge of revolutionary movements since—the Ghadarites were remarkably perspicacious within the specific social and historical context of their times. In our own socio-historical context, in view particularly of the situation facing their heirs, the Communist Left in India today—in speaking of 'Communist Left', I shall be primarily referring to the mainstream communist movement represented by the CPM and the CPI—three closely interrelated aspects of the Ghadarite revolutionary politics deserve to be noticed.

In the first place, whatever the problems with their theory, organisation and tactics and these are always important, the Ghadarite revolutionaries had absolute clarity concerning the most important question, namely, their strategic aim. British imperialism in India was the main enemy and the Ghadarites sought its revolutionary overthrow. Their struggle was geared to this purpose, all activity subordinated to this strategic aim. In the second place, again, whatever the problems, theoretical and practical, with their politics of armed insurrection, they understood it as an independent and alternative politics which stood firmly demarcated from and opposed to the mainstream bourgeois nationalist politics of their time as represented by the Indian National Congress—be it Constitutionalism of the liberals or the emerging populist but reformist 'non-violence' of Gandhi. They had a genuine distrust of this politics, expressed most eloquently in their poetry. Even though their own insurrectionist politics failed, this distrust was well-justified; it was vindicated by the manner in which freedom came to India, the compromise and settlement with British imperialism, the partition of the country with long-term disastrous consequences for the common people on both sides of the borders and the outcome of this freedom at the end of these fortyfive years.

In the third place, certainly sustained by the first two, is the third aspect, the revolutionary elan and moral grandeur of the Ghadarite revolutionaries which expressed itself not only in their heroic defiance of the British rulers at the post-uprising trials, on the gallows and in the cells and cages of the Andamans, but even more in the life and conduct of those who survived and carried on their struggle to the end, even against the new rulers after India became free.

These three aspects are among the most vital prerequisites of any living and vibrant revolutionary movement anywhere. Today one is compelled to note that the mainstream communist movement, within which the survivors of the Ghadarite uprising and their successors worked for long years and which claims or is supposed to be heir to the Ghadarite tradition, is rather poor in all these three aspects. A clear strategic aim, an independent, alternative politics, and moral elan of a revolutionary movement, all seem to have got lost somewhere along the way.

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CENTRAL to this loss is an issue which was basic to the concerns of the Ghadarite revolutionaries also, the issue of nationalism. It seems to me that, to state it unambiguously, if in *their* historical context a vibrant revolutionary nationalism was the source of the strength of the Ghadarite revolutionaries because it grasped and sought to resolve the basic contradictions of Indian society of their times, in the changed historical context of *our* times, an ahistorical and almost unthinking nationalism has been a major source of the weakness of the Communist Left over these years, because it has served to prevent it from sping the basic contradictions of Indian society er 1947; therefore the resolution of these ntradictions never became central to its politics, tributing to its disorientation as a revolutionary osition, an alternative, in our society.

It is true that we still do not have an adequate theory of nationalism, Marxist or any other. However, for the purpose of my argument, we only need to recognise one indisputable fact, namely, a most powerful social, political and ideological force of our times, nationalism is yet a historical phenomenon, with class and society-specific character, potentialities and limitations, and uses, and thus capable of manifesting itself in a variety of forms. Located as we are in the Third World and with the still alive though rapidly fading memories of the long struggle against imperialism, we in this country are conventionally inclined to see nationalism as a liberationist force or ideology. But we will do well to remember that during the same period ruling classes of the countries of imperialism were finding nationalism useful not only to consolidate their rule at home but also to defend and justify their aggression and domination abroad. More recently, we have witnessed several cases of similar political-ideological use of nationalism by ruling class politicians—among these by Margaret Thatcher in England with the Falklands War which routed the Labour Party as never before, or by Ronald Reagan in the US in his twice successful bid for the American Presidency.

Nearer home, we saw Rajiv Gandhi romp home in the unprecedented electoral triumph of 1984 on a platform of nationalism, with strong Hindu chauvinist, even anti-Sikh, overtones—the emerging platform of Hinduised Indian nationalism, which has now been well and properly appropriated by another political formation of the Indian ruling classes, the Bharatiya Janata Party. And these days we hear of a desperate Yeltsin, of course in competition with other equally desperate Russian politicians, turning to Russian national chauvinism as a diversionary device to retain his rapidly slipping control over a deeply discontented and restive Russian people...Besides we must not forget that we have known the nationalism of the German, Japanese and Italian varieties that so obviously sacrificed the people to the 'nation'. With the ruling classes, in the normal pursuit of their interests or when faced with situations of crisis in the polity, nationalism has often taken all sorts of statist or racist or fascist or imperialist forms, providing ideological support or cover to the emergence of reactionary authoritarian regimes.

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THUS understood, in historical terms, nationalism is not in itself progressive or reactionary, communal or secular, democratic or authoritarian, anything better or worse. It all depends upon its specific character, its programme and leadership and, above all, concrete historical context and conjuncture. Such are the factors which determine its precise nature and historical role. Nationalism in India before 1947 was indeed progressive; under a different, more advanced class leadership and programme, it could have been radical, even revolutionary. It was progressive because it aimed at resolving the basic structural contradictions of Indian society, congealed in imperialism, whose resolution, *against* imperialism, alone could clear the path for Indian people's continuing struggle for a better future. But nationalism need not be necessarily or entirely so in the post-1947 period. For the settlement of 1947 had its own harsh logic. It is customary in conventional scholarship or historiography to take a liberal, linear view of the historical process in India around 1947. In this view the Indian nation, or 'nation-in-the-making' if you prefer, is seen as winning *political* freedom for India in 1947 and then expectedly and almost unproblematically moving on to win *economic* freedom for the country—a movement which fortyfive years hence is still on.

The real historical process, however, has been quite different, essentially dialectical. The very manner in which the contradictions with imperialism were resolved, its 'transfer of power' involving no basic economic or social structural change, but putting new, now *Indian* ruling classes in control of the state power—this made the Indian people's struggle for economic freedom not only that much more complex and difficult but also primarily a matter of struggle against *these* classes. This is where increasingly the basic structural contradictions of Indian society now come to be located as the new rulers use their newly won state power to facilitate a historically specific form of capitalist development in the country, even as they continue to maintain, with due modifications, the old exploitative and oppressive socio-economic structures of Indian society.

In fact, given the new configuration of classes, class interests and contradictions, even the Indian people's continuing struggle against imperialism or neo-colonialism is no longer simply a continuation of the old, pre-1947, anti-imperialist struggle. Henceforth it can be effectively waged only as a part of the above-mentioned basic struggle *within* Indian society, for the imperialist or neo-colonial intervention or domination now occurs, increasingly, by the grace of, through the opportunities provided by, or even at the invitation of precisely the new Indian ruling classes. (It should be obvious that Union Carbide, once upon a time, and the IMF and World Bank more recently, don't just descend from the skies, they invariably arrive via Delhi.)

These considerations of *systemic* nature are of decisive importance for a revolutionary strategy; though I must hasten to add that within the same systemic context, it is always possible for the ruling classes to make good or bad choices and to pursue different, better or worse economic, political, cultural and other policies, and that this is a matter of great tactical significance for any revolutionary politics.

(To be continued)

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DUBEY: Battle for India's Future

(Continued from page 11)

suggestions like building the mosque a little distance away from its original place, building the mosque and the temple next to each other over the acquired plot of land and converting Ayodhya into a Jerusalem.

These are but the rationalisation of pusillanimity and vaccilation on the issue of secularism. The basic issue is to restore the confidence of the Muslim minority and for the government and the majority community to establish their bona fides. Very few measures will be as effective in this regard as building the mosque at the same place. All other arguments are irrelevant.

We cannot afford to lose any time in launching the campaign. Even if we lose the battle, we would have played a historic role. For if the saffron brigade wins, it will be a pyrrhic victory, because India will lose irretrievably in their victory. The contribution of those who fought and lost and made sacrifices in the process will be remembered by a grateful nation when the anachronistic *Hindu Rashtra* will collapse under the burden of its own contradictions, when people will discover to their horror that India has been taken back to the Middle Ages and that we are no better than a Pakistan, Saudi Arabia or Khomeini's Iran. For the BJP, it i a battle for the past; for us, it will be a battle for th future. ■

(Courtesy: *The Statesma*

Punjab Panchayat Poll: Ominous Portents

SATYAPAL DANG

Beant Singh, the Chief Minister of Punjab, is not wrong when he claims that the recently held Panchayat elections in Punjab were a big achievement of his government. They reflect a vast improvement in the Punjab situation and can surely help to bring about further improvement. However, the claim of the Chief Minister that there have been no serious irregularities during the elections except the usual ones, is not at all correct. In fact, if what has happened during these elections in Tarn-Taran district and some other parts of the State is not checked with a firm hand, the future of democracy in Punjab will be very bleak indeed. Here are only a few typical examples.

V. Pallasaur P.S. Tarn-Taran City

Nomination papers were to be filed on January 17, 1993. We were informed on phone by a comrade of ours that Surjeet Singh Mota was the candidate of a Minister for *sarpanchi* of this village. Gurbhej Singh, a former *sarpanch*, was to oppose him but had been picked up by the police as his candidature had not been approved. It was then decided to put up Gurpargat Singh. He too was nabbed by the police. The choice then fell upon Avtar Singh of the CPI on January 16, 1993. Police began a search for him. When he could not be traced, his one son from Amritsar city was brought to the village by the police to help trace his father but to no avail. Avtar Singh could not file his nomination papers on January 17, 1993 as the police was all ready to nab him. Someone else was sent in his place but he too was nabbed.

Surjeet Singh Mota was declared elected unopposed. Those whom he named were declared "elected" *panches* unopposed. Others were told that they could file nomination papers at their own risk. None dared.

All this happened although the fact of two candidates having been picked up and the police being sent out to prevent Avtar Singh from filing papers had been brought to the notice of the Deputy Commissioner. There are reasons to believe that he did intervene but his intervention did not prove effective.

The author, a CPI leader, is one of the most respected figures in the Left movement in Punjab for his bold struggle against the Khalistani secessionist-terrorists.

V. Assal Police Station Patti

The police had decided on its own or at the instance of a Minister that Lakhbir Singh (a retired SP) should be the *sarpanch* of the village. There were two opposing candidates—the CPI-supported Ram Singh; and Meja Singh s/o Mangal Singh. Just as they were about to file nomination papers on January 17, 1993, an additional police party appeared on the scene and picked them up. They and all others were told that only the approved candidates would be elected and anyone trying to resist would be taught a lesson. The retired SP was declared *sarpanch* and those named by him were declared *panches*—all "elected" unopposed.

V. Duggalwala P.S. Sadar Tarn-Taran

On January 21, 1993, the CPI candidate, Tarlok Singh (outgoing *sarpanch*), and the Congress-I candidate Vir Singh were forcibly prevented from filing their nomination papers for the office of *sarpanch*. And this despite the fact that the fear of this happening had been communicated to the SSP by a Congress-I MLA and to the Deputy Commissioner by this writer well in advance. Sukhdev Singh, the third candidate approved by the Minister-police nexus, was declared *sarpanch* unopposed. Persons named by him were declared *panches*—unopposed, of course.

Bhikhiwind Tehsil Tarn-Taran

Hardly three days before the polling date, that is, January 18, a part of the Panchayat area was declared a Notified Area Committee (members of which were to be nominated by the government). Nomination papers for the remaining Panchayat were to be filed on January 17 between 11 AM and 12 noon—as per the general routine.

The CPI candidate, Surjeet Singh, who had won laurels for his resistance against terrorists was the outgoing *sarpanch*. The BDPO had given him a certificate that he had relinquished full charge. It had leaked out that after having done that the BDPO was made to write a letter to the Presiding

Officer that this had been given by mistake and that he had not yet given up complete charge. What was stated now was utterly false. The matter was brought to the notice of the Deputy Commissioner. He intervened and gave firm assurance that the nomination papers of Surjeet Singh would not be rejected. This was on January 16. On January 17 the Presiding Officer, nevertheless, rejected his nomination papers on the ground that he had not given up full charge. Papers of five others were also rejected—all on wrong or frivolous grounds. Three were rejected on the ground that their houses fell in the area of the newly constituted NAC while the candidates insisted that it was not so and were ready to give proofs. The nomination papers of another candidate were rejected on the ground that he had written "Mazhbi Sikh" as his caste when he should (*sic* !) have written "Mazhbi".

The approved candidate and his nominees were declared elected unopposed *sarpanch* and *panches* respectively.

V. Chak Sikandar

A resident who dared displease the police sent the following telegram to the Deputy Commissioner:

> Police rounded up (hundreds of) supporters of the *sarpanch* candidate, Balbir Singh, to help the Congress candidate. Imprisoned them in (village) Manochal and in the village gurdwara. Released them, including myself, when polling time almost over!

Subsequently a written detailed representation was submitted to the Deputy Commissioner.

V. Hansanwali Near Goindwal

An ex-Army Subedar, Balbir Singh, met me and narrated the following:

The people in the village wanted him to become *sarpanch* but the police did not approve his name. People then suggested two other names. These too were disapproved. The police helped the 78-year old Karnail Singh s/o Santa Singh to get elected unopposed. His one son is an ASI in the police. Another near relation is in the ITBP. His nominees were made *panches*. A relation of his was a terrorist.

When I suggested a representation to the DC, the Subedar said: "People are too scared of the police to do that."

When I told him that in case of many villages in which *sarpanches* had got elected in this manner people had held demonstrations and *dharnas* before the office and/or residence of the Deputy Commissioner, he said: "The situation is not the same everywhere."

V. Naurangabad P.S. Sadar Tarn-Taran

Here is what Comrade Harbhajan Singh, the District Secretary of our party, told me:

> In village Naurangabad P.S. Sadar Tarn-Taran candidate "Jaila" for *sarpanchi* was ordered by the police not to file his nomination papers. He defied, filed his papers and won. Soon afterwards, the police went to his house. He had slipped away. The police beat up his children. People in the village are scared.

Chola Sahib P.S. Distt. Tarn-Taran

Here is what veteran freedom fighter Kirpal Singh s/o Pal Singh, outgoing *sarpanch* of this big village, told me:

> Besides myself, there were three other candidates for the office of *sarpanch*. Myself, Bachan Singh s/o Jind Singh and Mohit Singh s/o Narain Singh of Nau Jawan Bharat Sabha were nabbed and kept in police custody to prevent us from filing our nomination papers. Sukhdev Singh s/o Sampuran Singh, a *panch* candidate was also nabbed. Election took place on January 22, 1993. One Kulwant Singh s/o Sohan Singh was declared *sarpanch* unopposed. Nobody knows what he is. He is as much with the Congress as with the Akalis. He may be having links with the police also. Except me, others were released by the police on the 22nd evening. I was let off only on the 23rd. And I have come to you on the 24th.

V. Sabran Tehsil Patti

I had gone to the District Courts for some personal work. A big deputation from this village was searching for the DC or ADC or some other officer before whom they wanted to represent their case personally. They had telegrams and representations by post already. They told me that all nomination papers had been filed. Scrutiny had also taken place. Only about 15 minutes were left for withdrawal. At about 1.45 PM a police force descended.

It was declared that none except one Kundan Singh, said to be a police informer and one of the three candidates for *sarpanchi*, would be allowed to become a *sarpanch*. It was further declared that only his nominees would be allowed to become *panches*. And the Presiding Officer declared accordingly. One of the two rejected candidates for *sarpanch* was Boota Singh. He has given in writing to the DC that he was a candidate of the Congress-I. Nor is this all. He and eight others had been given the clearance chit by the police in writing to contest. It is not known why the police changed its mind subsequently. Presiding Officers accepting nomination papers only on being given written clearance chits by the police was not an unusual phenomenon in police districts.

Finally, a case of a different type in which the police yielded. Incidentally, this is in Amristar police district and not in Tarn-Taran police district.

V. Naushehra Dhalla

There was a straight contest. The Congress-I MLA, Shehbazpuri, was backing Jasbir Singh while the Transport Minister, Jagir Singh, was backing Gurdeep Singh. Jasbir Singh had no relationship of any kind with any terrorist. Gurdeep Singh was known to have honoured the relations of terrorists. The police nabbed Jasbir Singh and kept him in police custody with a view to get Gurdeep Singh elected. It was a very high-powered intervention that secured the release of Jasbir Singh on time. Jasbir Singh won by a good margin.

The Minister had made "raids" in Amritsar and Jandiala police districts also as the last example would show. However, it is in the Tarn-Taran police district that a nexus developed between the Minister, the police and a section of bureaucracy with the Deputy Commissioner not in a position to do much. The nexus made mincemeat of the much-talked-about democratic process at the ground level in at least 40 villages of this area. The same thing happened in some other parts of the State also though it was not a universal phenomenon. It is bound to spread in future if the bogus elections are not declared invalid and if those responsible for it are not punished.

Tail piece

Jandiala and Amritsar police districts of Amritsar Revenue District did not in general witness the Tarn-Taran phenomenon described above. The Amritsar police district, however, has taken a lead in another respect. The first meeting of *sarpanches* and *panches* of this area was called and held not by the Chief Minister, not by the Panchayat Minister, not by any Minister from Amritsar, not even by the Deputy Commissioner, but by the police and in the Police Lines. And even before they had taken the oaths. A quick initiative, no doubt. However, it is to be hoped that it will not become symbolic of the administration in Punjab in the days to come. ☐

(January 26)

Understanding BJP's Challenge

RAJ KISHORE

The BJP's response to the proposal of Harijan *pujaris* should be an eye-opener to those who assert that it is a fundamentalist party. The BJP has welcomed the step which would appear radical to those who are satisfied with much less than a casteless society. This does not mean that the BJP is also radical in social matters. It demands abolition of the Muslim Personal Law not as a supporter of parity or equality, but because it cannot tolerate that the Indian Muslim community should enjoy some autonomous social existence within the pluralistic Indian frame. The tribals or some other communities whom the BJP considers no less Hindu may follow their own social or family codes, or the Hindu society may even suffer inequalities based on birth or social rating. The BJP would not object to it, because it has no reformist agenda of its own. The essence of the BJP's social philosophy is complete status quoism. But the party is no less reactionary than the Congress or other political formations including even the Communists as far the social and family norms are concerned. It will accept change, as others have done, if that comes about as an offshoot of the process of modernism in living styles. The drawing room or kitchen of a middle class person owing allegiance to the BJP is no different from that of a Congress or non-Congress man of the same class.

The association of *sadhus* and *sadhvis* with the BJP has created a lot of misunderstanding in the minds of secular people. They tend to think that religious discourse is the dominant discourse of the party. The fact, however, is contrary. The BJP members are not predominantly religious people. They are more or less as religious as other sections of society or members of other political parties. They quote more from religious texts because their reading is limited and their perceptions have not gone beyond the early nineteenth century worldview of a lot of Indians. (Apparently the RSS, the think-tank of the BJP, has not grown beyond Bankim's *Anand Math.*) But a lot of Congress leaders possess an even more restricted diction while some could

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put the BJP to shame by their knowledge of the Hindu texts. Then why this association with a particular variety of *sadhus*? Because it lends credence to the BJP's Ram Janmabhoomi agitation (to call it a movement would be an insult to the positivistic word). The same support was drawn in the sixties when the BJP tried to make an issue of cow protection. Gandhi was a greater advocate of cow protection. But he never insisted on the use of force for this. For the Jan Sangh it was a symbol of Hindu assertion vis-a-vis the Indian Muslim community. The people associated with the Jan Sangh were (or are) not very fond of cows nor did they do practically anything for the well-being of the cows on a personal or organisational basis. With the passage of time the issue against cow slaughter was left behind and so were the *sadhus* who came to the fore in the wake of the agitation.

Before the Ram Janmabhoomi issue, the *sadhus* were not particularly seen with the BJP leaders. However, the mutual use is on a temporary and restricted basis. That is why the BJP *sadhus* do not violate the agreement. They do not discuss religion on the BJP's platforms. They champion only those causes that are dear to the party. When they overstep like Vam Dev, who proposed a Hindu Constitution for India, they are not supported by the BJP. One can rest assured that when the BJP comes to power, it will discard the so-called *sadhus* and *mahatmas* for they would have outlived their political utility.

This should expose the myth of *HIndu Rashtra* the BJP is labelled with and which the party seems to enjoy as a valued gift. If we perpetuate the idea, the only beneficiary would be the people whom we wish to degrade. The BJP does not long for a *Hindu Rashtra*. Well, it wants to take revenge and oppress the Muslim population. But let us state the fact plainly. Oppressing the Muslim does not constitute the *Hindu Rashtra* in any possible sense of the term. A *Hindu Rashtra* is one which has developed a Hindu way of governance. The BJP has not put forth any such proposal nor will it do so when it runs the state. It has not attempted to re-define the Hindu society on any grand level. What is Hindu poetry? What is Hindu art? What is Hindu music or painting? The BJP does not try to find any answer to these absurd questions, because it is the political formation of basically a modernist Hindu tribe which is burning with anti-Muslim feelings. Apart from this it has no other serious ambitions. If the *Hindu Rashtra* is meant to denote that India belongs to Hindus alone, a different coinage is needed so that the description looks perverse on the face of it. However, India does belong to Hindus, at least substantially. What the BJP longs for is an anti-Muslim India. It is disastrous to call them the forces of *Hindutva* within or without quotes as it may attract Hindus on a large scale for various reasons.

Take the issues that have attracted the BJP. The demolition (or removal, for those who are sophisticated) of the Babri Masjid. Article 370 which accords special status to Kashmir. The exodus of Hindus from Kashmir. Bangladeshi refugees who are infiltrators in the eyes of the party because they happen to be Muslims. No word against Hindu infiltrators, for the BJP treats them as refugees, as victims of Islam in Bangladesh. Whenever an issue is connected with followers of Islam, the BJP takes a fancy to it. Other issues are raised from time to time, but they are not pressed and soon forgotten. The New Economic Policy, for example. There was a *swadeshi* campaign by the RSS last year, but the same was dropped unceremoniously within a few months. The same fate had met the agitation against English earlier. Now the BJP people are equally Anglicised as far as they have succeeded. Of late the BJP has been putting up the case for smaller States. It got the creation of Uttarakhand as a separate State approved by the UP assembly but there was, and continues to be, no pressure on the Centre to clear the proposal. But issues relating to Indian Muslims keep agitating the BJP mind.

Hence the futility of bringing in the question of religion in tackling the challenge posed by the BJP. Many secular thinkers seem to have rediscovered the value of religion. The value was always there alongwith the problems that religion creates. One can always draw inspiration from the religious discourse. Gandhi did it in a very important way. That may be helpful even today. But turning to religion to tackle the BJP will be of no avail as the latter has not posed a single religious question. The so-called *sadhus* do not discuss religious affairs nor preach religiosity in the conclaves organised at the behest of the BJP. It is simply not possible. The BJP is not at all interested in religion. It has not evolved a religious critique of the present Indian order or the modern civilisation. It does not wish to make the Hindu more religious. For it Ram is not a religious entity, but a symbol to beat the Indian Muslim with. Advani has himself pointed out several times that the Ram Janmabhoomi is a political and not a religious issue. After all the BJP is a political party, not a religious group.

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THE secular thinkers did hitherto ignore Indian history almost completely while dealing with India's present. A particular period of Indian history is the cardinal inspiration for the BJP to fashion its politics of revenge. It has made history significant once again. It has also inspired the secular thinkers to discuss national history and proclaim its greatness. We as a people had our virtues as well as weaknesses. A true appreciation of the present requires an objective study of both. To repeat *ad nauseam* that India has been a great country and has not suffered from any internal problems is very harmful. On the one hand it supports the BJP's case and on the other asserts that nothing needs to be done to correct the infirmities. This again is a status quoist posture that the BJP adopts. For the BJP, history is a project. An instrument to kill the present-day Muslim. For the secular, it becomes a project to prove that he is no less patriotic. It will ultimately help the BJP as the latter promises to rebuild India's lost glory. An objective assesment will, on the contrary, demand from the BJP as well as the seculars to make a critical examination of the entire past and undertake certain corrections. The demand for the so-called social justice is only one of them. Sadly nobody seems to be interested in wider perspectives.

Debates about religion, history and the essence of Hinduism are not very helpful to combat the BJP although some soul-searching may take place. If it is honest and reasoned, we shall be able to discover ourselves afresh. If it is part of a strategy, it will create another band of falsities and half-truths. However, the BJP is not going to answer the questions raised during the debate whatever the nature thereof. It need not be, as its strength lies elsewhere.

What is the source of this strength? It is a case against Indian Muslims and against those who pretend to support them. To succeed against the BJP, genuine battles must be fought on this front. A number of things need to be done to prove that the Indian state is really secular. A uniform civil law seems to be a must. The Shah Bano amendment to the Constitution should be done away with. State grants to minority organisations may have to be stopped. Uniform criteria to help all those desirable institutions that lack resources would be more reasonable. At the social level, some expression of regret by Muslim organisations over the misdeeds of Muslim rulers will be immensely helpful. Sacrificing a number of disputed buildings would altogether puncture the BJP's case, although it may be difficult to ascertain the exact number.

Such suggestions may irritate many, but the fact is that no community can hope to live in peace when bitter memories of the past have been revived on a large scale. No country is a no-man's land. India belongs to everybody who inhabits her. But it is not a right alone. It enjoins certain duties and responsibilities too. If we treat the country as a piece of land, the past may be conveniently overlooked. If we treat it as a community, certain things have to be done to ensure perfect goodwill. The nature of the past Hindu-Muslim relations and what the Hindu of today thinks about the Muslims was not of much consequence till the BJP was a political failure to establish its communal angle. That angle seems to have gained strength now. To ask the Hindu to be generous and liberal is good enough. But that alone is not going to help in the present atmosphere. The communalised mind may wonder why the same prescription is not for the other community. The question is perverse in certain respects, but the perversity can be exposed only when there is a popular conception that the Indian Muslims are doing their best to be fair to history and just to the present in their outlook and demands for religious autonomy.

The conceptions have to be fought at their own level. The reality may be starkly different, but who cares for the reality? If it is proved that Indian Muslims have been a neglected lot, the Hindu may recall that he too has not been taken proper care of. Such comparisons can impress only an unbiased and reasonable man. When the atmosphere gets increasingly communalised, definitive steps must be taken to ensure that there remains no ground at all even for mischievous elements to spread the communal virus. Even after best efforts, they will persist in their wicked project but hopefully they would not succeed as at present if people can realise that the minorities do not enjoy any special concession. Of course, the majority has a bounden duty to respect the sensibilities of a minority group but when it seems to be on a war path, it becomes the counter-duty of the minority group and its true well-wishers to puncture the logic of the war and thereby prevent the communalists of the majority from convincing the rest that they have a cause against a particular community. ■

Education: Vital Yet Neglected

K.K. BALACHANDER

Though education is a vital sector, it has been given a low priority in India's developmental efforts, and relegated to the backstage as a 'welfare' activity by all Finance Ministers, including Dr Manmohan Singh. In many other countries, even during periods of financial stringency, the education budget is not tinkered with but in India it often becomes the first casualty of cut. It has received the lowest priority in every budget. Last year's Budget (1992-93) saw a substantial cut in the allocation for education in spite of the Union Finance Minister's promise of a "structural adjustment programme with a *human face*". Such a neglect is shortsighted since the future of the Indian economy will depend largely on skill and knowledge-oriented activities. The government continues to believe that just industrialisation meant development and so gives it top priority. This is misleading because even rapid industrialisation can be realised only if it has the complementary support of education. It is the emphasis on education in developed countries as a catalyst towards economic growth that has made them what they are today.

Though the expenditure on education as a percentage of the GNP has increased from 1.3 in 1950-51 to about 3.8 per cent in recent years, the actual requirements of the education sector are far from being met. Also it still compares unfavourably with the corresponding positions in many developed, and even developing countries (six to nine per cent of the GNP). India is also far behind the target laid down by the Education (Kothari Commission), that is, six per cent as early as in 1966. Recently the World Bank itself has admitted that public resources devoted to education (and health) are far below what seemed to be required, given the low educational and health status of much of India's population.

The percentage share of the education sector in the total Five-Year Plan allocation has also consistently declined over successive Plans; the relative share of education was almost the lowest (3.5 per cent) in the Seventh Plan, despite the hymns sung in praise of education in every Plan document. It appears that our planners and politicians are not at all concerned about the fact that more than 50 per cent of India's population is still educationally backward, that every second Indian is still illiterate. The fulfilment of the constitutional directive of providing free and compulsory education upto the age of 14—which is the key requisite for economic advancement and social/political restructuring of society—still remains a pipedream. We are already 33 years behind the time stipulated in the Constitution (1960) on achieving this aim! Even China can now boast of a literacy rate of 75 per cent as against India's 42 per cent, and the former's success in recent years is no less due to its high literacy level.

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THE Government of India must definitely pursue a course of structural reform and strive to promote efficiency allround. But the policy-makers, at the same time, must also take up in right earnest measures for the development of human resources, a major aspect of which is education. This will surely motivate the poor to play their due part in development. *It is necessary to set in motion a process wherein economic reform and educational reform will go side by side, each reinforcing the other.* The situation in India's educational front is no less alarming than that on the economic front. Concentrating exclusively on economic reform would not only be tantamount to abandoning the Prime Minister's and the Finance Minister's promise of 'reforms with a human face' but may even defeat the reform objectives themselves.

The nation has already paid a heavy price for its continuing neglect of a sector which is vital for its progress. The 1993-94 Budget must break with the past by according a better deal for education and providing more funds to it. Besides, for encouraging the flow of more private funds to the education sector, the Finance Minister should extend attractive reliefs/concessions to individual/business organisations/trusts for donations made to education. In fact they should obtain 100 per cent tax relief for contributions that they make towards investment in education, particularly in the spheres of higher professional/technical education. The government should extend all incentives for encouraging industry-university collaboration especially in professional/technical categories of higher education.

The government could also consider the establishment of an autonomous Finance and Development Corporation, akin to a Development Bank, for harnessing Central and state funds for educational development. The Corporation should have all resource-mobilising facilities like other Development Banks. The bonds that they issue should be made fully tax-exempt. The Development Departments of the government using the manpower output of higher education also could make some contribution towards educational activities as suggested in the 'Challenge of Education' document (1985). These are some of the measures that need to be explored with utmost urgency by the Finance Minister for easing the growing financial squeeze faced by the education sector. ■

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Response to Appeal: A Silver-Lining

VINOO HORA

Concerned over the negative developments in the country—incited by the partisan attitudes and communal rhetorics of the vote-catching politicians and leaders—which culminated in the demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya on December 6, 1992, *Mainstream* (December 26, 1992) published an appeal to like-minded citizens, issued on behalf of the Working Group on Alternative Strategies. The response is doubtless heartening. The *Mainstream* office has been flooded with pledges signed by people from all corners of India, vowing to preserve the unity and integrity of our nation and to honour the religious sentiments of all sections of Indian society.

The total number of pledges received so far is 1310 and the maximum response is from Andhra Pradesh, closely followed by Orissa and Bombay (Andhra Pradesh 620, Orissa 307 and Bombay 181). Taking the appeal in its true spirit, people in these regions organised themselves in groups and launched signature campaigns. The pledges/appeals were photostated or cyclostyled, translated in various regional languages, circulated, signed and sent to the *Mainstream* office, regardless of the cost incurrred therein.

In this connection mention must be made of remarkable individual initiatives. As many as 299 pledges were cyclostyled by Mopidevi Venkateshwar Rao (retired Headmaster of Vani Niketan High School, Warangal) who also collected signatures on them. This exercise was sponsored by Gade Rukma Reddy Memorial High School, Mahbubabad, Warangal district of Andhra Pradesh. Seventynine signed pledges were sent by Shamsheer Ahmed on behalf of officers and staff members of the District Collector, Prakasam District, Andhra Pradesh.

Following are the excerpts of a letter to Nikhil Chakravartty, *Mainstream's* Editorial Adviser, from K. Saradamoni, an avid reader and contributor to our journal, from Thiruvananthapuram:

> I have sent by separate mail about 20 'pledges' signed by different people. I was a bit hesitant in doing this, but to my surprise, most of the responses were heartening. I felt that they were waiting for such a thing. Many said: this is a good thing; this is the correct thing, etc. Some said that it is the mixing of religion and politics that has created the present situation and categorically blamed the Central Government for the above. Those who signed the pledges are ordinary people, small shopkeepers, postmen, unemployed women, low level functionaries, etc. These are the people we would have categorised as "those who do not react". True they may not initiate a campaign or join a protest march. But they are not happy and do not agree to violence and hatred and killing. They were too happy to sign this without dislocating their day-to-day life.
>
> Unfortunately the voice of these "invisible" people are not heard, neither are they represented.
>
> Shall send more often pledges as soon as they are done.

Expressing faith in our efforts, Manish Khanna from Amritsar writes:

> This is the time when we all should be united and be at the front of the scene.
>
> I am signing the pledge and sending it to you.
>
> Thanking you and proud of being an 'Indian'.

◆

IT is interesting to note that the pledges, though in essence remain the same, have been modified by some individuals slightly to suit their own views. For instance, a few pledges instead of abiding by Gandhiji's words, "With God as witness," have been changed to "With my conscience as witness." One must not take this in the negative sense for these words seem to come from the heart of an individual. And what is 'conscience' but the voice of God? What is important is that believers and non-believers alike believe in safeguarding the integrity of India as a nation-state. We are also obliged to regional magazines, daily newspapers, etc. for giving space to the appeal in their pages and thereby helping us in widening our horizon. The appeal in Andhra Pradesh has been carried with Shabana Azmi's photograph and under the caption 'Shabana's Appeal'. We have received numerous letters bearing this appeal and we are grateful to Shabana for joining us and thereby making the appeal more attractive!

Collecting signatures is only the first step of the Working Group on Alternative Strategies; concrete action shall and must follow. For we must not underestimate the enemy. He is shrewd and vicious and thrives on illiteracy, fundamentalism, blind faith and superstitious beliefs and, sad to say, there is no dearth of the aforementioned in our country. It was, therefore, not surprising when one day our mail included thirty-odd letters with photostat copies of supposedly our pledge but superimposed with excerpts from Bal Thackeray's interview to *Time* with a message stapled on to it:

> Contractor (Busybee)
> Enemy of Hindus
> Immigrate to Pakistan.

We must watch out for such rodents who would gnaw at the very roots of our nation and make us vulnerable to alien forces. We got one such response to our pledge which shows the hurt psyche of the minority community and the desire to get help from outside to avenge themselves.

While we have received many letters commending our efforts and showing willingness to join in our venture, we have been recipients of brickbats too. We received a very sceptical, anonymous letter from a reader in Hyderabad which reads thus:

> The problem of communalism cannot be solved by printing pledges, which once signed (if at all) is forgotten, or by holding debates, discussions, symposia in 5-star hotels and attended by various dignitaries and celebrities.
>
> As a part of your group of "Working Group on Alternative Strategies" it is necessary that you go in for honest journalism of the investigative kind, go to the common man and find out his grieviences (you'll be surprised to find that half of them do not know what happened at Ayodhya, all they know is how it has disrupted their life and deprived them of their meagre bread and butter) and work to remove these and bring about a change in their living conditions.. *That* would be alleviation of poverty the right way... Otherwise this pledge, is a waste of expensive newspaper stationery and nothing else

While respecting his opinion, we beg to differ. The wide response to the appeal and the large number of signed pledges reaching the *Mainstream* office provides a measure of the reassertion of a wide cross-section of our people of their allegiance to the cherished values of secularism and democracy which the communal forces are hell-bent on destroying—a silver-lining behind the gathering clouds. ■

RUSTAMJI : Leadership of Cranks

(Continued from page 6)

leadership to the louts in our countries, and we lack the ability to stop them.

The Indian subcontinent—massive, diverse, rich in its religions and its philosophies, that led the world in culture a few centuries ago—is struggling to find its bearings. In his book, *Richer by Asia*, Edmund Taylor commenting on the Indian says:

> The most basic of all attitudes is their total, magnificent, slightly inhuman toleration of all destinies. You are what you are meant to be, you go where you must go; I do not know you, but I accept you, because I also am what I was meant to be and I too go where I must go.

This was the sublime attitude that held us together for thousands of years. If we cannot get back to that, let us at least strive to give the young the chance to be modern, secular and progressive, and we can only do that if we curb the cranks.

Would you get anything like this anywhere else in the world? Would the German, for whom order is everything, and everything else is verboten, carry out a rally in which shrines are demolished and people are killed? The answer is yes—he did just that in the Nazi regime when he prepared the ground for a fascist takeover.

Would anything like this happen in Russia, the home of revolution? Yes, but in a different way. There would be many secret indoor meetings during the dark winters, much talk about action, and in the spring they would come out in a massive procession, shoulder to shoulder, singing a song of revolution, and the police would open fire as if they had learnt it in India, and the injured would be carried away and cared for by adoring women.

In England, the popular method, as in the coal-pit closures, is strikes and massive processions, the disorder being confined to the coloured peoples, who even throw marbles on the ground so that the mounted police may slip and fall. And then for days on end there is concern not for the police, not for the casualties, but for the horses that had been treated so inhumanly.

We in the Indian subcontinent have to learn one lesson that allowing knife-grinders to start a quarrel, which leads to ghastly consequences and then to wait for a summit of leaders to become friends again, is too childish a method of international politics. We have to break out of the leadership of cranks who start riots, and instead depend on firm laws and democracy, and make the state strong enough to resist the frenzy of mobs. ■

JUST OUT BOOK ON CHILD LABOUR

Economics of Child Labour & Fertility

By:

M. Sumangala • B.S. Nagarajan

1993, xxviii, 220, Tables, Figs. Demy 8 Vo.
ISBN 81-7018-733-8 • Rs. 190

It is a micro-level study of child labour in a developing country like India with its avowed welfare outlook, and discusses several aspects of the subject—economic, sociological and demographic. It also eminently focusses light on its linkage with fertility in a major state of the country, viz. Tamil Nadu.

Child labour is a serious problem in several states of the country. Existing literature does not do justice to the problem nor does it unravel motivations behind it. The present study is an innovative one. It underlines the importance and direction of causal relationship between child labour and fertility behaviour and their major antecedent variables, and will be found useful for future studies of the subject, as it will help policy formulation.

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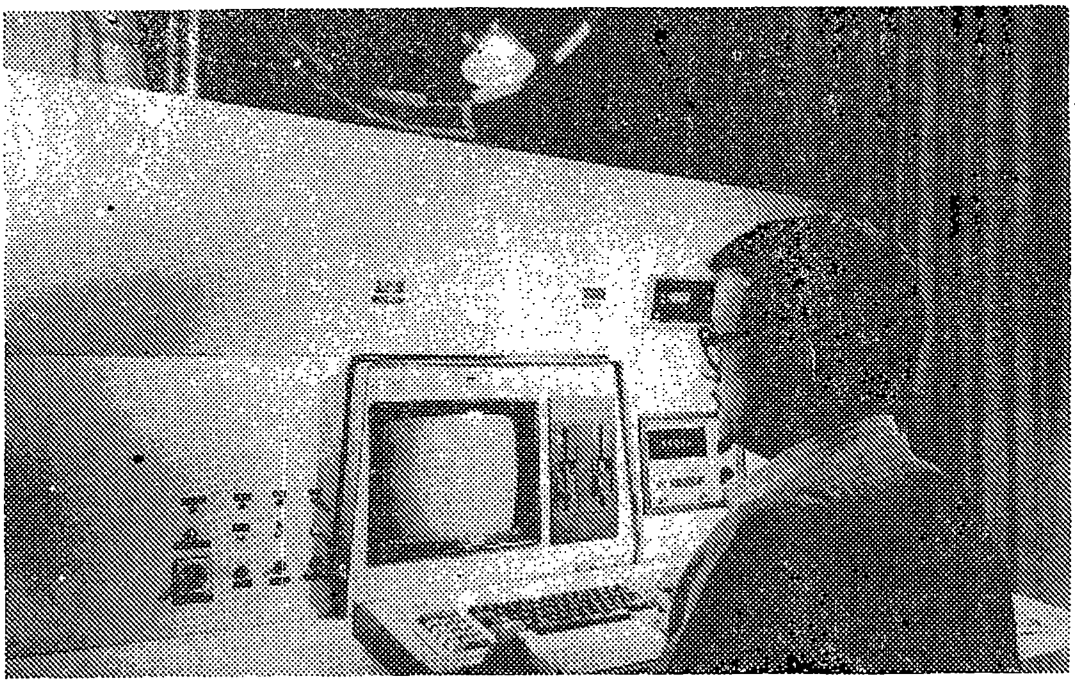

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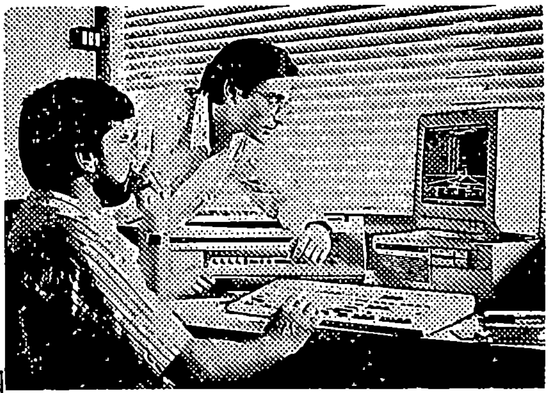

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EDITORIAL

Face of the Menace

The time has come for an all-out ideological offensive against the protagonists of *Hindutva*, a concept rooted in the Indian version of fascism. With the BJP hell-bent on a confrontation with the Central Government on February 25 it is imperative to call its bluff and expose the *Sangh Parivar*'s nefarious game, particularly after the White Paper has unmasked the role the BJP Ministry in UP played in the demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya on December 6, 1992.

Through the spread of lies, calumny and disinformation (as was clearly seen in the Joshi-Advani-Singhal-Thackeray campaign on the destruction of Hindu temples in the Kashmir Valley, something which has been proved to be palpably false by both veteran journalist, B.G. Verghese, on the pages of this journal and *India Today*'s Principal Correspondent, Harinder Baweja, in that periodical as well as in her interview to the BBC), the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the outlawed vehicle of the *Sangh Parivar*'s communal propaganda, has lent a new dimension to its battle not for the Ram temple at Ayodhya but for the seizure of political power at the Centre. Assiduously it propagates the hate-Muslim campaign among the people in general while publicly seeking to project itself as a "nationalist" organisation pledged to resurrect India's cultural traditions and past glory.

Essentially the RSS brand of "nationalism" based on the so-called *Hindutva* is unalloyed fascism. It is necessary to bring out this fact in bold relief now that the RSS has declared open war on the Constitution and Indian unity.

The BJP leaders do not use the same language as the Shiv Seva supremo, Bal Thackeray, or the VHP chief, Ashok Singhal, but all of them being members of the *Sangh Parivar*, their basic loyalties are to the motive force and inspiration behind the *Parivar*: the RSS operating from Nagpur.

Hence the thoughts of the late M.S. Golwalkar, the RSS' former *Sarsanghchalak*, constitute the basic philosophy of the *Parivar* activists who brought down the Babri Masjid and cast a lasting slur on India's image of secularism and tolerance the world over. What message did Golwalkar spread to his disciples in his lifetime? This is what he said:

> If you examine closely, you will find that Hindu religion is the only one which can be called religion (*dharma*). The others are not religions at all...
>
> The non-Hindu people in Hindustan must adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of glorification of the Hindu race and culture... —in a word they must cease to be foreigners, or may stay in the country wholly subordinate to the Hindu nation, claiming, deserving no privileges, far be any preferential treatment—not even citizen's rights.

Any perceptive student of history can find a striking similarity between thi concept of "nationalism" (alias *Hindutv* and the "national socialism" of Ad

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Hitler that is once again raising its ugly head in reunified Germany. Both are based on chauvinism and racial superiority. Yes, the *Sangh Parivar*'s ideological basis is racial hatred. Bal Thackeray's interview to Anita Pratap of *Time* is a revealing commentary on that score. L.K. Advani did not deem it necessary to utter even a word a criticism of such pronouncements. Precisely because the Shiv Sena is the BJP's electoral ally. But also because he too, like the other BJP leaders, fully endorses the Sena's hate campaign. It was of no mean significance that two BJP MPs—Ram Naik and Pramod Mahajan—openly crossed swords with the CPI leader, Indrajit Gupta, on the floor of the Lok Sabha on February 23 fully justifying the BJP stand of sharing the Shiv Sena's anti-Muslim platform and strongly defending the Sena's activities in the Bombay riots. With this there is no shred of doubt regarding the BJP's approval of the Sena's onslaughts against the Muslim populace.

What needs to be understood is that the *Sangh Parivar* is not just another political outfit striving to capture power through democratic means. It is an authoritarian body which cannot countenance any dissenting voice. Actually its entire objective is to subvert and negate democracy by any means—even through the use of the very democratic process it seeks to repudiate in the name of "nationalism".

It is high time to call a spade a spade. The Hedgewar-Golwalkar brand of "nationalism" militates against Rammohun-Rabindranath's spirit of Indian renaissance, and Vivekananda-Gandhi's vision of national moral awakening and upliftment through genuine religiosity. In short, it strikes at the root of our composite culture and secular values and, above all, democracy. Thus this "nationalism" is in essence anti-national.

This needs to be brought into sharp focus at the earliest for the very purpose of safeguarding the country's unity and integrity. That indeed is the bounden duty of the secular forces within and outside the ruling party resolved to eradicate communalism which Jawaharlal Nehru described as the Indian version of fascism and which has now spread its tentacles far and wide on the national plane, thanks to the callousness, negligence and opportunism on the part of the bulk of our liberal and radical democrats.

Only by mass intervention through an ideological struggle can the menace be effectively fought and defeated. Executive measures amounting to curtailment of democratic rights not only become counter-productive, they also serve to objectively strengthen the elements against whom they are enforced, thereby heightening the danger at a time when India is facing the gravest challenge to its democratic structure, ethos and values it has zealously guarded since independence.

February 24 *S.C.*

Shocking Misbehaviour

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

What a mess in the ruling party of our country! A Chief Minister, arraigned by the public all-round for having failed to put down two protracted rounds of communal killings and pillage in India's leading cosmopolitan metropolis, hits back by publicly accusing the Defence Minister of the country of conspiring for his ouster so that he himself could form a coalition with the very Opposition forces involved in the disturbances, and that after taking over the State, the Defence Minister would plan to take over the Centre!

What is worth noting is not that Sudhakarrao Naik has had to resign from Chief Ministership after having made such grave allegations against Sharad Pawar—a senior Cabinet Minister holding the important portfolio of Defence—but that he continues to be a member of the ruling party just as much as the Defence Minister is with all the serious accusations sticking to him. Meanwhile, the so-called Disciplinary Committee of the Congress party has been twiddling their thumbs about rules and procedures of ensuring discipline, and the Congress President displaying record-breaking patience listening to one and all, without batting his eye or raising his finger.

Here is an extraordinary political menagerie, in which sniping at each other in public has now been replaced by frontal attacks which openly bring out allegations of disloyalty without any serious action being taken against the accuser or the accused. The only touchstone is whether one is kept in office or not.

The average Congress response to the sordid goings-on in Maharashtra is that after all Sudhakarrao Naik has had to pay the price of having to quit the Chief Ministership. But can a party upholding the self-respect of its members permit such charges being bandied about by its senior members—without even the fig-leaf of an investigation into the charges themselves? If Naik's charges against Pawar are just a case of intemperate outburst on the part of a person beleaguered—as it is being made out by the Congress authorities—it shows the measure of irresponsibility that has become permissive in the ruling party today. And Sharad Pawar can continue as Cabinet Minister without getting such allegations peremptorily withdrawan or immediately investigated into. If Naik's allegations are without foundation, how does he stay on in the party after having made such reckless charges questioning the reliability of the Defence Minister of the country? If Naik continues to remain in the party after having made such allegations, would it not mean that either Sharad Pawar is allowed to be under a cloud, or that the Congress President does not mind having such a suspect to continue as a Cabinet Minister? There is no room for cavalier treatment of this case. It is a serious matter involving the very integrity of the person entrusted with the Defence portfolio of the country. Nor can this be brushed aside on the ground that the Prime Minister has somehow to maintain the balance of factional forces within the government and therefore can hardly afford to alienate his Cabinet colleagues.

◆

THIS is the critical question before the party which has been entrusted by Parliament to hold the reins of power in the country. This is not a question of ethics and morals—no doubt important as such considerations are in public life—but the danger of permitting such a situation pass by unchallenged. Because such allegations set a precedent in which a Home Minister can be charged with having conspired to subvert the government or a Finance Minister having looted the exchequer for personal gains—with no action being taken on the allegations or the accuser. How can such a party leadership be entrusted with the charge of governing the country?

No government can function with such Billingsgate principles, since the goverance of a country is not determined by trading abuses by those entrusted with the responsibility to govern. Democracy enjoins certain discipline in the day-to-day conduct of those who have been elected by the democratic process. There is a tendency nowadays to regard that once a person is elected, he gets the freehold of misbehaviour as under our system there is no right to recall. And if elected representatives individually can trade charges questioning the very bonafides of other elected members, why not that prevail in the collective that is the government? In other words, free-for-all becomes a prerogative of those who happen to rule the country.

The Congress mess in Maharashtra is a very serious matter. This cannot and must not be treated as closed once a new Chief Minister is chosen who is accepted by both sides—the Naik group and the Pawar group. The plea for such a move would be that the Congress party must somehow be kept together so that it may continue to rule, and the best way to do so would be to have a patch-up coexistence of both, without purging either. Because there must be no washing of Congress dirty linen in the public. And this would be trotted out as the pragmatic approach in politics.

If one cares to take a principled view of the stinking mess that has overtaken the Congress party in Maharashtra—and not Maharashtra alone—should not such a State be put under President's Rule? The incompetence displayed so egregiously by Sudhakarrao Naik's Ministry in dealing with the communal upheaval in Bombay, particularly in the January round, should have promptly led to its dismissal and the imposition of President's Rule in the State. That would have been welcomed by all right-thinking citizens of that metropolis. And the Narasimha Rao Government at the Centre would have gained in stature, as not having spared the party over which he presides, from the punishment due to it. By not taking such a step, the Congress party at the Centre has reinforced the charge of blatant partisanship by misusing the powers entrusted to it under the Constitution. And in the bargain, Bombay was virtually left to the mercy of Shiv Sena hoodlums—the commerce-cum-financial capital of this country was kept under the ransom of a political mafia thanks to the civil war raging within the ruling Congress party.

The elaborate bandobust by the Centre to ward off the BJP challenge to its authority on February 25 is a demonstration of the administrative prowess as the ruling party at the Centre. But this by itself does not sustain its authority to govern. For that, the Congress leadership has to recover its lost ground on the political front. Without it, its authoritative rule becomes dangerously fragile. □

(February 23)

The following is a poem by Bangladesh's foremost poetess to mark the national day dedicated to the martyrs of the immortal language movement of 1952 in erstwhile East Pakistan—Twentyfirst February. This year Dhaka's Shaheed Minar and noted novelist, Taslima Nasreen, have been attacked by fundamentalist hoodlums on February 21—another testimony of the spurt in the elements determined to stamp out the legacy of Bangladesh's cultural renaissance. This poem's relevance has been heightened in the light of these latest developments. —Editor

8th Falgun

BEGUM SUFIA KAMAL

The stars at night and the cotton silk
suffer the anguish of pain.
The tears of night on this blood-smeared track
can never wipe out
the red streak of blood
which burns again
on this Falgun day
when flowers blossom in many forests.
When a mother waits with anguish
for her prodigal son to return,
unknown fears gather in her breast.
The young bride lights a lamp and waits;
anxiously, with longing eyes.
But they shall not return. They answered
the call of their mother and lost their lives
in the hands of cruel tyrants:
the spring air brings the blood-smeared hearts
of these martyrs. Each breath
brings their fragrance, in each vein their blood flows.
courage fills my heart and the new flowers of life
blossom with faith each day:
our fears and our doubts disappear
as down the red track smeared with the blood of martyrs
journey the fighers for freedom in every age
trampling every resistance that comes in their way.

(Translated from the original Bengali by Pritish Nandy)

BJP and Gandhiji

HARSHAVARDHANA

The tying of a saffron head-band round the forehead of Mahatma Gandhi's statue at the Gandhi Maidan (Patna) during the recent visit of L.K. Advani to Bihar cannot be dismissed as the handiwork of misguided *Ram-bhaktas*. Prostituting Bapu's name in the hate-campaign by the *swadeshi* fascists is very much in their scheme of things. Their swearing by Gandhism *ad nauseam* is a clear case of the lady protesting too much. The leaders whipping up Hindu-hysteria have been talking of *satyagraha*, *swadeshi*, *swawlamban*, Gandhian socialism and, to crown it all, *Ram-Raj*.

The organisations whose very politics is based on *asatya* (a big lie and numerous white lies) talk of *satyagraha*, the leaders whose *Ram-rath* was made of imported Toyota talks of *swadeshi*; the party whose support base is more or less confined to the entrenched privileged class talks of Gandhian socialism, the "descendants" of Nathuram Godse talk of *Ram-Raj. Hey Ram*!!

Gandhiji's *Ram-Raj* is anything but a theocratic Hindu state, as is being advocated by the *Sangh Parivar*. Mahatma Gandhi categorically stated it a number of times. At one occasion he declared:

> By *Ram-Raj* I do not mean *Hindu Raj*, I mean by *Ram-Raj* Divine Raj—the Kingdom of God. For me Ram and Rahim are one and the same deity.

This is because he believed in the unity of all religions. He opined:

> Religions are different roads converging to the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads, so long as we reach the same goal.

◆

MAHATMA GANDHI's entire life vindicates the truth that it is one thing to be religious and something else to be communal. A truly religious person cannot be communal and a communal person cannot be religious in the real sense of the term. Religion is based on love and compassion, communalism is founded on hatred and prejudice. In sharp contrast to Pandit Nehru, Gandhiji was undoubtedly a devout man. No doubt he was a *Ram-bhakta*, but certainly not one like the so-called *Ram-bhaktas* of today who spread hatred against the Muslims, indulge in loot, arson, riots, killings, rape and butchery. Who can forget that Gandhiji lived and died for the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity?

Gandhiji would have been the first person to oppose the BJP's brand of *Ram-Raj* because he believed:

> If I were a dictator, religion and state would be separate. I swear by my religion I will die for it. But it is my personal affair. The state has nothing to do with it...

Gandhiji would have been the first person to oppose the demolition of the Babri Masjid to erect a Ram Mandir on its rubble because he believed:

> Temples or mosques or churches—I make no distinction between these different abodes of God. They are what faith has made them....

Gandhiji would have been the first person to oppose the BJP's fascistic propaganda of Hindu superiority because he believed:

> .... all religions are true, all religions have same error, all religions are almost as dear to me as my own Hinduism....

When Gandhiji said: "Politics bereft of religion is absolute dirt, ever to be shunned", he did not mean religion in the sense communal parties like the BJP mean today. He did not mean religion in the narrow sense of the term. His religion is synonymous with humanity. His favourite *Ram-Dhun* contains the line *Ishwar Allah Tere Nam* (Allah and Ishwar are your names). And in fact it is this Ram-Rahim approach of the Mahatma that prompted Nathuram Godse, a member of the RSS, to assassinate the Father of the Nation. The *Ram-Raj* the BJP-RSS and their allies are talking of, is not Gandhi's *Ram-Raj* but Godse's *Nathuram-Raj*. Today, Bapu cannot be faulted, for the misuse of his concept of *Ram-Raj* by the communal forces, because the same communal forces misuse even the name of Bhagat Singh (recall the so-called *ekta yatra* of Murli Manohar Joshi) who was an atheist, a Marxist and a secularist par excellence.

The need of the hour is to expose the communal forces by a relentless counter-propaganda. If the BJP and its allies are repeating lies hundreds of times with the hope that they will stick at least once, we Gandhians should also repeat the truth as long as there is one person who refuses to believe it. I hope in this hegemonic struggle for the minds and hearts of the people truth alone will prevail. *Satyameva Jayate*!

■

Need for Meaningful Parliamentary Debate

KAMALA PRASAD

The budget session of Parliament has begun. The Prime Minister has once again separately called for a freeze on religious issues so that the country can concentrate on its economic agenda. This is enough indication that in spite of the focus on the economy the political agenda will attract more than usual attention. The last winter session of Parliament had raised issues that have been debated since and would refuse to be sidetracked. In fact, the developments in the last few months foreshadow a veritable crisis of the parliamentary system. It is not too early to reflect on it for Parliament to seek solution of the same.

In the scheme of Indian democracy Parliament has a central place. It is a powerful-sounding board for emerging national priorities. It records dissent and underscores danger signals for the polity. The voices in Parliament are listened to for the authentic expression of India's pluralistic politics. It provides legitimacy to the actions of the government and a timely warning of the reactions of the country on the same. It is a crucial safety valve for the flourishing democratic system and spirit in the country. Therefore, even in an era of expanding executive domain the parliamentary processes are a matter of faith in democratic societies.

From that standpoint, the winter session marked a dangerous turning point. the Leader of the House in the Lok Sabha could not make a statement and the nation had to look to other means to know the government's position on crucial political issues that had assumed crisis proportions. The Leader of the Opposition was prevented from participating in the debates of the House. He arrived in the Capital after the events of Ayodhya only to be arrested and transferred out of the Capital. The subsequent release after the session was over only added to the drama. The other BJP leader, A.B. Vajpayee, was permitted by the presiding officer to have his say but was not allowed by his colleagues in other parties to do so. Thus, the vital limbs of the Lok Sabha had their say only through the unusual use of the instrumentality of "no-confidence motion". All this has set a precedent of doubtful nature leaving other institutions to appropriate the role assigned to Parliament in periods of crisis.

The discussions on the no-confidence motion did not dwell on the tasks ahead. There was almost exclusive attention to shifting of responsibility. It was clearly a holding-on operation till the political parties reassessed their prospects with the vote banks and the ruling party extricated itself from the ongoing turmoil in its leadership equations. The gains and losses of the main parties could only be tentative. The budget session can be expected to witness a more definite, a more aggressive expression of the shape of political development in the country.

However, the issues thrown up have larger relevance for our parliamentary system. Will Parliament take note of extra-parliamentary, in fact extra-consitutional, trends gaining in ascendency in our policy? Will it assert its authority to strengthen the politics of accommodation in preference to that of extra-parliamentary confrontation? Will the members reflect on their role within the system to influence or even pressurise their respective parties to come to terms with long-term political interests of the nation? The answers to these questions will shape parliamentary politics and the democratic processes in the years to follow.

Isolation of the BJP

The principal Opposition party in Parliament was seemingly isolated. Its version of the events and its explanation of the larger ethical issues involved in Ayodhya did not impress other than the party members. There was some evidence of embarrassment in the defences offered. The BJP as a responsible, law-abiding party took a beating. However, the party was not cornered since the others did not have any positive plans either.

The BJP unfolded two major objectives. First, it did nothing to divert attention from dwelling on the past, which could have exposed its equations with communal extremism. Secondly, it pushed hard to prove the failure of governance by the Union Government, apart from that of the Government of the State. It seems to have succeeded in both. The Congress party was truly cornered. The NF-LF Opposition found serious lapses on the part of the

The author, a retired member of the Indian Administrative Service, is a former Chief Secretary in the Bihar Government.

Union Government, in spite of the open support it had from all parties except the BJP-Shiv Sena combine. The motives and the credentials of the ruling party seemed suspect; its lack of will to face realities was no longer in doubt.

The nervous reaction and actions of the Union Government did further damage. No one believed that the Prime Minister will be capable of fulfilling his commitment of rebuilding the demolished structure. The dismissals of the State Governments made even the ally of the Congress, the AIADMK, to voice its dissent. The functioning of the Cabinet did nothing to dispel the impression of continuing confusion about the Congress stand in following up on the commitments being announced. The NF-LF faced the dilemma of numbers and could not prevent the BJP from taking advantage of this situation. The isolation was not an unmixed disaster; the BJP seemed to be setting the political agenda and treated as an alternative to the ruling party. The drawing up of the battle lines was yet to emerge.

Assertion of Secularism

The winter session had to grapple with the question of the constitutional provisions of secularism as never before. That was the principal cause of all the sound and fury.

There was a heartening reaffirmation of the country's abiding faith in building a secular, modern India to which all the people of India will contribute. The BJP did not press its brand of "majorityism" to counter what it calls "minorityism" practised in free India to sustain secularism. However, the consequences of rabid "majorityism" did not bring about the level of secular assertion and consolidation the situation demanded. The BJP was in strategic silence on this issue inside the House but outside its cadres and sympathisers did not suppress their sense of performance and achievement, whatever the leadership might profess or preach. The issues involved are, therefore, destined to play a vital role in the process of political mobilisation that has been unleashed by the BJP and what is proposed to be countered by other parties.

The first issue is that of "appeasement" of the fundamentalist leadership of the Muslim community. The Shah Bano case and the ban on Salman Rushdie's book are the two recent events to bolster this claim. The Congress-Muslim League alliance in Kerala is also shown as an application of convenience insofar as the secular creed of the Constitution is involved. The repeated use of Abdullah Bukhari for electoral purposes falls in the same category. And all these issues are relevant for an enlightened discussion on secularism as enshrined in the Constitution. The admission of past aberrations is the honest starting point for correction of harmful biases for transient, partisan gains.

It is well to underline that all these issues cover merely the interaction, gains and losses of leaders of political parties. These are not the issues that influence the day-to-day lives of the common people. The minority bias, if any, has not made the Muslim and other minorities more prosperous, they have not been conferred disproportionate rights beyond the provisions made in the Constitution. The Muslim masses are perhaps more suppressed today, thanks to their own leaders who are chasing shadows rather than substance. As a reaction the Hindus are being prepared for a similar treatment. The Parliament represents the people of India and should rightfully look at this situation. There is need for an attitudinal corrective and a more determined move towards towards a juridical social ethos based on enforcement of compliance with the common as well as the fundamental laws of the land.

The second important issue is that of the place of religion in politics. It is an irony that the BJP denounces religious extremism in Punjab and Kashmir but has itself become its shining armour. The break-up of the Janata Party Government on the issue of the RSS links of the Jan Sangh constituents; the Congress-Bhindranwale nexus in the root of the Punjab conflagration; the first destabilisation of Farooq Abdullah in Kashmir; the search for usable religious leaders during election campaigning—all these bring to the fore forcefully the place of religion in practical politics than all the assertions made to the contrary in theory. What we see today is the culmination of a phase of Indian politics in which the use of religious, and in fact communal, means was overlooked as long as it led to political power. The BJP flaunts its values and morality in politics but ultimately it has proved by its own action to be no different than the others. Its claims to superiority have been demolished. Only the Left parties have escaped any major taint on this score. It is time, therefore, that a more positive view of the place of religion in politics and religion for nation-building is debated.

The parliamentary discussions disclosed a reiteration of the oft-repeated view that separation of politics from religion was necessary. That formulation may well be unequal to the task that lies ahead. The important point to ponder is the place of religion in a secular state and the limits of state action in dealing with religion-related matters, so that tolerance and compassion gain in ascendency.

In the first place the importance of education and political socialisation is emphasised. The core social values of religion and all religious creeds emphasise religious cohabitation, community solidarity, and socially relevant communitarian activities. The BJP may regret the fallout of its reactive religious politics on the Muslim fundamentalist fringe. The positive counter-movement of the mainstream political parties as well as the state should consider a framework for creative interaction with persons of religious learning to involve a common minimum curricula of religious education in all state-financed educational institutions. The absence of such a scheme is encouraging distortions of various kinds. The mainstream political parties should muster the courage to build the necessary party infrastructure that can incorporate a positive view of religion as part of its socialisation agenda. Jointly, these two streams of action will provide the needed momentum to the follow-up of the tempo created by meetings and rallies.

The state will have to evolve a framework to limit its intervention in the internal matters of the communities unless there is a uniform basis for dealing with all communities in the same manner. This should expand the social reforms agenda by taking positive view of the movements of dissent sweeping all communities equally rather than a move towards a hands-off policy. To this end the more complex task of organising community action based on territorial identity for economic and social development should be undertaken. There has to be a continuous stream of common endeavour that puts people of all the communities together to achieve common goals and targets. This will fit in with the changing design of development placing communitarian efforts on the top of the agenda. This is possible to achieve through governmental efforts by organising voluntary groups, consulting services, common service facilities, literacy, vocational, educational and sanitation activities.

A reconstruction of religious understanding has to act negatively as well as positively: negatively, by clarifying the historical trash of facts and fiction and positively by looking forward to a new basis of nation-building that will not have the kind of foundations which have led repeatedly to India's fragmentations and slavery. The glory that was India's culture was repeatedly destroyed by the politics of Indian principalities, kingdoms and provinces. Religion did not unite them. Let not history repeat itself.

This fact should atttract attention to the basis of Indian nationalism. Religion as the sole basis of a state has been very recently defeated in the sub-continent with the founding of Bangladesh. The assertion of ethnic and cultural dominance has resulted in the break-up of the former USSR. These are stark lessons of recent history we may disregard at our own peril. The arrogance of the majority is a dangerous portent for nation-building. India, therefore, must visualise a cultural-territorial basis for nation-building where all religions, all languages and ethnicity play positive roles to achieve an integrated excellence not known before. That is what we have been trying and we must reaffirm our faith. The BJP is presently working on a weak foundation that cannot bear the load of the superstructure of a modern nation. It will reassess its position provided the other parties in Parliament and outside assert their renewal of faith. The assertions so far are inadequate since the follow up mechanisms have not been focussed upon. This will require a reversal in the trends towards politics of privilege and alienation; economy of ill-gotten acquisition of riches and open exploitation of the deprived; the dominance of the urban elite and the marginalisation of the rural roots. The shadow boxing amongst the leaders and parties does not provide much hope for changes in the desired directions or energetic follow up on the promises made. People will expect that Parliament will focus its further introspection on these crucial issues and refrain from the game of shifting merely the culpability of the immediate events on to others. If this does not come about, there is enough scope for larger tragedies to follow.

The Status of Administration

It is in the fitness of things that administration comes under searching scrutiny. A capacity study of civil administration as to why it is failing to measure up to the emerging tasks is overdue. Opinion about its role in the present political context varies widely and it is usually left without political direction. The present Prime Minister has owned the limitation of taking hard decisions in a soft state like India. He has now wondered why the administrative channel does not function when the political channel gets silted up. And a year ago he had warned that since the bureaucrats interpret the rules, they should not consider themselves as rulers. Thus, they were seemingly denied freedom to act even where rules matter. Such a large divergence of views can only leave the bureaucracy in confusion. To enforce administrative accountability in such a situation is a very difficult task.

The present is more complex. It involves the following important questions, namely, what are the channels of Centre-State interaction; what is the scope of Centre-State administrative relations, what are the conditions for Central intervention in State administration; and finally will administrative accountability be enforced? India is not a federation in the classic sense. The Constitution provides for formal and informal instruments for a continuous and intensive interaction between the Central and the State hierarchies. The Union also has its independent sources of intelligence in every State. There can be no lack of information to act upon. The Constitution has also laid down specific procedures to enforce compliance with Central instructions/directives; failure to do so can lead directly to Central intervention. The scope is wide enough to cover all eventualities. The Prime Minister's interpretation of Article 356 of the Constitution does not go well with the actions of the Union Government in Nagaland and Manipur and more recently in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh. Imposition of the President's Rule continues to be based on political judgement about the capacity and motivation of the administration of a State. These provisions are meant to expose the bluff of any State administration specially when a crisis of the Constitution is involved. Not to admit a failure is a message for the administration.

The State Government accepted its failure in Ayodhya. In fact, the former Chief Minister has gone to the extent of stating that officers should not be penalised for carrying out the government's orders; he himself was prepared to take the punishment. The Union Government's case for absolving itself of responsibility in Ayodhya is based on the structure of federal administrative relations. That the present authority is heavily loaded in favour of the Central Government is apparent from what is already recorded. The number of times Article 356 of the Constitution has been used is itself a refutation enough of its inadequacy. The changes sought by the Prime Minister is doubly dangerous: as accepting the alibi for the recent inaction and opening the flood-gates for larger misuse of the powers sought. However, the damage has been done; the system of administrative accountability stands fully devalued.

Administrative accountability flows from accountability at the political level. This chain appears to have finally broken down. The administration is alternately in a state of furious helplessness and philosophical surrender. It does not have an independent status under the Constitution. The assault on the administration appears one-sided in the light of its structure, its scheme of security, its prospects of upward mobility, its visibility, and its morale. In a situation where bureaucracy has become the convenient scapegoat, the administration is obliged to look outside the system for safety and security. Its commitment to the system, its structure, its integrity has gone down. And one more chapter has been written in this chapter of development. However, protection needed for law enforcement is even more crucial than in other departments of administration. The chain of command has to function effectively since any time lost may ultimately mean an opportunity lost. The desired impartiality has also to be visible. All these virtues are becoming a casualty to political expediency. A new design of executive accountability can reverse the trend. Reforms in the structure and regime of statutory authority are overdue. Both limited as well as expansive government will have to administer a bureaucracy. The old basis seems to have crumbled. A thorough debate to diagnose the present maladies and work out changing equations in the context of emerging priorities and the nature of politics is called for. There is some recognition of this reality in the recent address of the Prime Minister to senior bureaucrats in Delhi and parliamentary attention will give it the required push.

Leadership in Politics

The system of parliamentary government demands on leadership is onerous. The leader has to fight on many fronts at the same time. The complexity of governance makes for the complex structure of decision-making. The demands, of democracy are time-consuming. Therefore, the risks inherent in decision-making are self-evident. In the Indian conditions there is a further limitation. Vivekananda had long ago noted that no sooner is a leader elected in India the Opposition to him emerges, including efforts to dislodge him. Thus, apart from governance, the leader has to look for security. A psychology of instability is part of the democratic process.

The Congress' search for charismatic leadership has its impact on the style of leadership of almost all political parties in India. A mindset of rallying behind the leader cannot be faulted but this should not be to the exclusion of issues or irrespective of the consequences of individual acts. Leadership qualities come under test during periods of crisis. However, there is a tendency also to sweep critical issues under the carpet as part of the support syndrome. This has done incalculable harm to the management of governance. These contrary trends can be managed by a charismatic leader but requires a different composition under a normal leader. India is passing through that phase. The transition has involved working out mechanisms to confound political accountability and to ward off probing embarrassing questions. Both the Congress and the BJP have followed similar course. Future trends are yet hazy.

A closer look at the structure of political leadership may show the dichotomy between its composition and the socio-economic realities. The leadership represents neither the social composition of the population nor a sharp ideological edge. There is no genuine struggle for achieving leadership on the basis of a changing political agenda. The support base shows considerable dependence on elements who were better out of politics, who join the political stream not necessarily on the basis of political work. The grassroot is a neglected consideration. Therefore, the strength that comes from a strong political organisation is lacking. When the Prime Minister laments on the silting up of the political channel he is possibly articulating the truth. When the late Rajiv Gandhi spoke of the power brokers he was reflecting a reality too. This phenomenon has not strengthened alternative institutions for governance; it has weakened all institutions of governance. The spotlight on accountability of leadership will have to grapple with these complex issues.

We may not have seen the last of the communal carnages or crises of governance. The situation demands, above everything else, an enlightened political leadership that can take up the emerging issues of governance with urgency and seriousness. A non-charismatic leader is more appropriate for the task. But parliamentary direction can provide a broader framework than merely the reforms in the bureaucracy. India's reforms agenda needs to be broadened if failures in piecemeal reforms which are narrowly targetted towards sectional interests and groups are to be avoided.

Politics of Consensus

The emergence of P.V. Narasimha Rao was notable for a commitment to pursue a course of political consensus in the management of the affairs of the nation. At the height of controversy regarding the influences on and the course of economic reforms he explained that his view of consensus did not conceive of unanimity of view amongst all the political parties. He had started a process of consultation and broad understanding about the need for policy change and their direction. He would have the responsibility and would be ready to take the credit as well as the blame. That, of course, holds good for the other areas of governance too.

There has been doubt if this refinement has really been the channel for taking the political and administrative processes for a ride. The Ayodhya episode saw a surfeit of meetings, secret parleys, conclaves and the conclusions were hardly shared with the parties in Parliament. Three consecutive meetings of the National Integration Council authorised a firm implementation of the provisions of law and the Constitution. The final turn of events found the government searching for scapegoats and all democratic institutions devalued. In discussions, there seems to have been no consistency. Separate sets of advisors were used and even the party had internal differences. The other parties slowly distanced themselves apprehending a deal with the BJP which could undermine their stands. The modified politics of consensus was in shambles. The turmoil in the proceedings simply reflected this reality. The Prime Minister was seen as playing the traditional power politics rather than consensus politics. He was the target of attack from the Left, the Centre and, of course, the Right.

This analysis would seem to indicate that consensus was never meant to be pursued seriously. This approach might have been a ploy to keep dissent within the party arrested till the Prime Minister stabilised himself and organised his support mechanism. His manners and styles of action or inaction was a great help in this process. His design of consensus has adopted the short-term objective as analysed by H.T. McClosky:

> The opinion has long prevailed that consensus is needed to achieve stability but the reverse may be the correct formulation: that is, that so long as conditions remain stable consensus is not required; it becomes essential only when conditions are disorganised.

At present, when the country faces a great challenge to its democratic system, the parliamentary debates disclosed a lack of trust in the motives and style of the moves of the Prime Minister. The dilemma has to be resolved. The credibility of the system is at stake.

Developing Directions

The winter session of Parliament clearly reflected a political stalemate. Nothing has happened since then to break it. The crisis of governance is deepening. The announcements made in the wake of the Ayodhya events remain mere announcements. People feel bewildered. They are groping to find out what direction country's politics will take. The budget session will, therefore, be forced to take up the political agenda at the point where the winter session had left it. The political consequences of the new economic policy will only add to the agenda.

Secularism cannot be the sole political agenda; its potentials to confuse the masses in terms of religion-based polarisation could bring sharper reaction. A more comprehensive package should consider citizens not merely as blinded vote-banks but as part of a participatory process in political decision-making. There is also a clear indication that the role of religion in politics will not wither away in the near future. This will call for newer approaches to mass mobilisation. Two complementary developments have already taken place. Bihar has demonstrated the macro-level approach through mass meetings by like-minded parties. New Delhi has demonstrated, in the case of the planned move by the BJP to oust alleged Bangladeshis, the potentials for micro-level mobilisation by citizens' groups in defence of law and social cohesion. Both are important as a means to political education and to free people's minds from pseudo-religious trance. The BJP has been practicing both these means for sometime and inventing occasions to combine many an activity with periods of religious significance. A positive contribution of the present crisis in terms of revival and rethinking of the mode and content of political mobilisation needs to be taken advantage of.

Another issue of significance is the position of extra-parliamentary activities and measures on the parliamentary processes. So far such activities have been largely local and targetted against the policies of the government. The departures this time set dangerous precedents. The mobilisation of masses from across the country for indulging in openly illegal activities reduces the capacity of the local administration or inhabitants to deal with it. It is in the nature of invasion on the rights of local people to manage their own affairs. Such trends, with the prospects of infiltration by undesirable elements, may raise the visions of a *pindari* era once again. Thus the limits of legitimacy of extra-parliamentary instruments to win political power is too important to have missed the attention of Parliament.

In the immediate future we seem to face a period of political uncertainty and turmoil, social strife, cultural divide, and reluctance to invoke the spirit of political accommodation. The objective of nation-building through national consolidation has receded further in the background. The parliamentary debates have to bring into sharper focus the positive developments taking place across the country in this direction since no other institution is as well equipped to do so. All the communities are today facing dissent, dissent of the positive kind. There are groups fighting to create a new sense of commonality of interests and ambitions within the framework of cultural distinctiveness. This trend can get articulation in Parliament. This most representative and most important national forum has the potential and the capability to mould national opinion in the task of nation-building. There has to be a surge towards unity in the plurality of opinions.

The longer term perspective does not appear to be as pessimistic as it seemed initially. The BJP gains were gifted by cynical and amoral moves of the governments of the—States as well as the Union—to exploit religious propensities of minorities and the majority alternately. A realisation would now dawn that state should keep to the legally and morally neutral course on issues on which unanimity within the community is impossible. The rights guaranteed in the Constitution should not be tampered with by executive fiat. Perhaps a correction in the style of governance, insofar as it concerns the affairs of individual communities was overdue. The government must concern itself with only matters that concern all the communities jointly. This is the road to a juridical society towards which dissent movements in various communities are moving. Parliament should help this trend. ■

Facts of History that can Enlighten Us

S. S. KHANOLKAR

The history that we have learnt in our schools and colleges was not complete nor did it have the proper approach. According to historians, our communal outlook is partly due to this sort of improper teaching of history.

The average men when they come out of schools or colleges get the following impressions:

1) Muslim rulers were foreigners. 2) They looted our temples. 3) They massacred our local population... and so on.

1) We were never told that rulers who had settled down in this country are no longer foreigners. British rulers did not settle down in this country but they were ruling over us under the direction of British Parliament. That was not the case with Muslim rulers.

2) Our temples were centres of wealth. We offered ornaments to our gods and goddesses. Such practices were never prevalent among Christians or Muslims. It may be noted that our wealth in the temples attracted the attention of foreign aggressors.

There is an instance in which Muslims are also found looting Masjids. Babar has written his autobiography which was originally written in Persian but its English translation is available and the title of the book is *Memoirs of Babar*. He had come from Uzbekistan and his soldiers who had accompanied him, on their way to India, had looted Masjids. We come across this fact in the above-mentioned book but our textbooks are silent on this.

3) Aggressors had not only massacred the Hindu population but some of them, like Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdalli, had massacred Muslims also. No distinction between the communities was made.

The Marathas of Nagpur during their invasions of Bengal had massacred the Hindu population, especially women, in order to snatch their ornaments. In general this was due to the military not receiving regular salary; and hence this was a general phenomenon. Jadunath Sarkar in his book, *Fall of the Moghul Empire*, gives the above-mentioned fact to the readers.

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FOUR European powers had come to India and of them only the English succeeded in establishing their political power in India. The Dutch and the French lagged behind because they depended on orders and instructions from their home countries which never reached in time to India. The Portuguese having dabbled in religious matters—especially the conversion of Hindus to Christianity—forfeited the sympathies of the local population. In addition to this the *Angreys* the naval power of Marathas, did not allow them to step down beyond the borders of Goa. The *Angreys* were so powerful that they had defeated the English three times. Peshwas in alliance with the English smashed up the naval power of *Angreys*. This action was definitely anti-national.

Dr K.M. Panikkar in his book, *Survey of Indian History*, points out that among the Indian rulers it was only Shivaji who could anticipate that the future aggressor of India would come from the seaside and not from the Hindu Kush mountains as was the case in the past. It was for this reason that he had built two sea forts namely, 'Sindhudurg' and 'Vijaydurg' and laid the foundation of the naval power of the *Angreys*. It may be noted that the Moghuls had no naval power. And this noble work of Shivaji was destroyed by the Peshwas.

Babar was the founder of the Moghul empire. If he had hurt the feelings of the Hindus by demolishing Ram's temple he would have met the same fate as was the case with the Portuguese. It may be noted that in that case he would not have been able to lay the foundation of the Moghul empire which ruled over this country for three centuries.

Historians are of the opinion that the Moghuls were more civilised than the the previous rulers. Pandit Nehru points out in his book, *Discovery of India*, that all the Moghul rulers except Aurangzeb ruled over this country as Indian rulers and not as Islamic rulers.

In the medieval history there was no struggle based on religion. The Moghuls had fought with the Bijapur Muslims. Nizam had joined hands with the Peshwas and the English in their battle with Tipu Sultan. Mahadji Shinde had written to the Peshwas not to wage a war with Tipu. In case Tipu was defeated there would be no enemy for the British in Madras which would remain solely under the rule of the British. Babar had taken the throne of Delhi from Ibrahim Lodi.

If our textbooks had included and emphasised these facts they would have helped to curb the communal outlook which prevails today. ■

‘ can tell you nothing pains me so much as when I see little children who are denied proper education. Sometimes they are denied food or clothing. But if our children today are denied that, what is our India of tomorrow going to be?

Jawaharlal Nehru

(Speech at AICC session, Avadi,
January 23, 1955)

Sah Brothers

603/4, "NIRANJAN" 6TH FLOOR
99, NETAJI SUBHASH ROAD
BOMBAY - 400 002

In view of the significance being currently attached to children in South Asia within the framework of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and the fact that this issue will be a important subject of consideration at the forthcoming SAARC Summit, we publish the following articles with the purpose of drawing attention to the topic. —Editor

SAARC and the South Asian Child

MAYA CHAUDHRY

When the long-awaited SAARC Summit finally convenes in Dhaka, business is likely to focus on political and trade issues. Yet an important issue, in which the SAARC nations have made significant progress, will also come up for consideration and warrants serious attention. This is the issue of children and development.

The seven SAARC member-states, at the Second Conference on the South Asian Child held in Colombo last September, presented their National Plans of Action for Children (NPAs), giving substance to the earlier commitments they had made at the 1990 World Summit for Children. There a new set of goals for the 1990s was agreed upon. These goals include major reductions in infant, child and maternal mortality rates, control of major childhood diseases, a halving of child malnutrition, safe water and sanitation for all communities and a basic education for all children.

The World Summit Declaration has since been signed by the Presidents or Prime Ministers of 138 countries, including those of all the SAARC members. Each signatory to the Declaration is required to draw up a National Plan of Action, outlining precisely how these goals are to be met and it is these Plans of Action and the Resolution emerging from the Colombo Conference that will be up for discussion at the forthcoming SAARC Summit.

Success in reaching these targets would represent not only a drastic improvement in the human condition today, but also a fundamental investment in the economic prosperity of tomorrow. No longer is the issue of child survival, development and protection merely a humane consideration. It is becoming increasingly clear that this once "soft" development concern is really at the centre-stage of a nation's development process; that a sustainable development effort requires investment in children, particularly in their health and education, as a matter of priority. This would ensure not only a population capable of demanding and enjoying the fruits of development, but one which would be capable of contributing towards making this development possible.

The examples of Korea and Taiwan stand out in this regard. These newly industrialising countries, the "Asian Tigers" as they are often referred to, invested first in social sectors such as education and health, before embarking on a path of rapid economic development. That these countries have achieved rapid economic growth without floundering on account of an unskilled, unproductive, unhealthy and illiterate labour force is testimony to the significance of a sound education and health base for a developing nation. The process of economic development not only sets in motion an ever growing demand for higher and newer skills and training, but also requires a labour force capable of adjusting to the new techniques, methods, ideas and institutions that such a growth requires.

The need to emphasise these issues is all the more critical in the present economic situation in which most developing countries find themselves. There is an increasing trend towards a free market system. As developing countries, with their chronic

Children on Political Agenda

MAJOR MILESTONES

November 20, 1989

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.

September 29-30, 1990

The World Summit for Children is held at the United Nations headquarters in New York. World Declaration and Plan of Action on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children adopted and since accepted by 138 countries.

shortage of resources, embark on this process of structural reform and adjustment, they are likely to face acute fiscal deficits. In such a situation the areas which are likely to suffer cutbacks in expenditure are the health and education sectors. These sectors have no vocal lobby, nor do they have political or purchasing power. They are, therefore, the easiest, the most non-controversial areas where cuts can be effected. Yet the long-term implication of these reductions on the social and economic fabric of a nation can be crippling.

It is in this practical context that the Indian Government needs to define and position what it calls *human resource development*. India's numbers will remain its liability rather than its potential strength unless it invests in ensuring that every child born grows up to be a productive contributor to its economic growth. Human Resource Development has never been a welfare portfolio, and its own inventors need to recognise this. It should be expressed during the Eighth Plan period in far greater attention to providing the primary development inputs to all Indian citizens during the early foundation years of their lives.

There is otherwise a danger that the commitments made to children at the World Summit and at the Colombo Conference could turn out to be nothing more than paper promises. The Dhaka Summit offers an opportunity to edge closer to where they belong—centre-stage of the development process. ■

A Commitment to the Child?

India's National Plan of Action

VINEETA SHANKER

India has stressed the protection and care of children since the time of formulation of its Constitution (Article 39, Directive Principles, Constitution of India) and drew up a national policy on children in 1974. More recently, India has been party to a number of global and regional initiatives for children. In 1992 it formulated a National Plan of Action on Children (NPA), entitled 'A Commitment to the Child' as a direct outcome of its participation at the 1990 World Summit for Children. Together with the other SAARC nations, India presented its NPA at the second SAARC Conference on Children held in Colombo in September 1992.

The NPA is essentially a statement of a country's commitment towards bringing children into the main frame of its development planning. It is, therefore, logical to expect two sets of information to be available in any NPA. These are (a) the current status of children; and (b) the nation's commitment to them in terms of goals, strategies and allocation of financial outlays.

Part II of India's NPA deals with a review of the situation of children. It provides a large set of valuable information on several aspects of child development, ranging from health, nutrition and education to child welfare and child labour. Thus, India's vast population of 298 million children (in 1990) is likely to rise to 307 million by 2001. The NPA also records India's efforts in the field of primary education (Classes I-V, ages 6-11) years with a gross enrolment rate of 101 per cent implying universal access. Enrolment rates for elementary education (Classes VI-VII, ages 11-14 years) is, however, much lower at 60 per cent. Also disconcerting is the persistence of the high drop-out rates (55 per cent at the primary level) and gender irregularities.

In the areas of child health and nutrition, there has been an improvement with the decline in infant and under five child mortality rates as well as with the spread of immunisation programmes. However, although the infant mortality rate dropped to 80 per 1000 live births in 1990, it is well above the target of 60 in the "Health for All by 2000".

It is here that some problems with the data presented in the review arise. The first is that the data refers to different years for different indicators, so that, while education information may be related to 1990, data on health and nutrition may refer to 1989 or even earlier. This does not permit a comprehensive picture of the status of children in India.

Secondly, the data has no consistent bench mark reference; that is to say, it is not related to any single set of targets that India has set out to achieve. Given the fact that the NPA is the direct outcome of the acceptance of the World Summit goals, the lacuna is disturbing.

This is even more so because Part I of the NPA outlines India's commitment to the child in terms of the World Summit goals. Thus the two parts of the NPA do not quite hold together. Does the document fulfil its intended role? It is more of a general statement of intent than a carefully worked out and costed strategy for the achievement of goals. There is no systematic attempt to put the good intentions in the context of either the existing situation or the goals to be achieved. As a result, strategies are not spelt out; the sequencing of targets is not indicated, likely problems are not envisaged and possible solutions are not sought. More devastatingly, there is no attempt to work out the material, organisational or financial requirements that an effort to achieve the World Summit goals would require. It seems unfair—not only to the children, but to whatever vision India has of its own future. ■

Child Development in South Asia

Anatomy of NPAs

V.S.

The National Plans of Action (NPAs) for child development are essentially statements of each country's commitment towards giving priority to children in investment planning. These NPAs form an integral part of the international, regional and national effort to give primacy to the survival and development of children. To a large extent, therefore, the NPAs reflect the real importance given to children by countries which are part of the global initiative on according priority to children in national development planning.

These NPAs are a direct outcome of the World Summit on Children held in New York in 1990. All the seven SAARC countries were supporters of this Summit and signatories to the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children as well as to a Plan of Action drawn up at the Summit. Accordingly, they committed themselves to formulating national plans drawn along the lines of the Summit Plan of Action and aiming to achieve the goals identified as global priorities.

At the subsequent SAARC Summit at Male in November 1990, a panel of experts was set up to prepare regional guidelines for achieving the World Summit goals. These guidelines endorsed all the seven major goals of the World Summit as well as the supporting and sectoral goals it had identified. The 1991 SAARC Summit at Colombo agreed that the NPAs of the different countries would be presented at the Second SAARC Conference on Children (held in Colombo in September 1992) and the progress towards these goals would be reviewed annually.

Since all the SAARC countries, both individually and as members of a regional group, have endorsed the World Summit goals and have followed the Summit guidelines in making up their NPAs, there is a strong common thread running through all the different plans. Most of the NPAs also present the current status relating to each of the World Summit goals accepted by them. The notable exception is India as its NPA does not summarise its current position vis-a-vis these goals anywhere in the text, leaving them to be gleaned from the different sections. There is no clear mention of the maternal mortality rate, a crucial indicator of the quality of health care available to the Indian mother and child.

Despite predictable similarities, the Plans are not identical. The countries have modified the targets of the World Summit goals, taking into account the situation prevailing in their economies. Where the gaps between the World Summit goals and the existing situation are too wide or where the internal assessment of the country in question is that the World Summit goals are not practically feasible, some modifications have been introduced, in accordance with the reservations permitted by the regional guidelines. For example, Pakistan has fixed a target rate of 80 against 50-70 per thousand live births in the case of under five mortality rate, Nepal admits that the achievement of 100 per cent enrolment rate by 2000 AD is an over-ambitious target for it. Similarly, as the provision of safe drinking water and sanitary facilities, particularly in rural areas, is fairly low in most of the countries of the region, the targets set by them are below the World Summit norms.

The pace of change envisaged by the countries also varies. While Nepal has set a target of reducing the infant mortality rate from 107 (1990) to 80 by 1996, Bhutan has set itself a more ambitious target of 50 by 1997 even though the IMR was 125 in 1990. Similar differences also indicate to some extent the difference in emphasis accorded by the different countries to the different goals.

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MOST of the NPAs have worked out the resource requirements and financial implications that the targets for development of children will entail. These have been examined to a varying degree of detail. Nepal has worked out not only the material and manpower resources that the commitments endorsed by it would imply but the detailed financial implications of these requirements as well. It has gone a step further in identifying the proportion of the required resources that are likely to be available internally and the amount of external financial flows that would be needed to fulfil the targets. Other countries have indicated to a lesser extent the resource implications of the targets set out in their Plans of Action. The notable exception to this is India which has not indicated, even in a cursory manner, its assessment of the kind of financial commitment that subscribing to the goals would need.

The allocations reflect the relative importance attached by each country to the different sectors. All countries have placed the greatest emphasis on education, with the exception of Pakistan. It is interesting to note that both Sri Lanka and the Maldives, which have already been able to achieve a fairly high level of enrolment (94 per cent and 115

SAARC Process for Children (1986-92)

MAJOR MILESTONES

October 27-29, 1986

The First SAARC countries Conference on Children held in New Delhi. The Conference Resolution called upon all SAARC countries to give children the highest priority in national development planning.

Bangalore, November 1986

The Bangalore SAARC Summit endorsed the Resolution of the First SAARC Conference on Children. The Bangalore Summit Declaration called for "an early conclusion and adoption of a Convention on the Rights of the Child". It "subscribed to the goals of universal immunisation by 1990, universal primary education, maternal and child nutrition, provision of safe drinking water and adequate shelter before 2000...It should be possible to ensure at the end of the century, that no child need die or be denied development, for reasons of material poverty in the family".

The Summit also directed the Standing Committee to undertake annual reviews of the situation of children in the SAARC countries.

Islamabad, December 1988

The Summit declared 1990 to be the SAARC Year of the Girl Child.

Male, November 1990

Held shortly after the World Summit for Children. A Regional Panel of Experts was appointed to draw up guidelines for regional goals and targets. The decade of the Girl Child, 1991-2000, was declared.

Colombo, December 1991

The Summit urged member-states to complete their National Programmes of Action for Children, and agreed to hold a second conference on South Asian children.

September 16-18, 1992

The Second SAARC Conference on Children was held in Colombo. The Colombo Resolution appealed for enhanced budgetary allocations to the social sector, asserting that investment in children be made a "non-negotiable political commitment".

The Resolution will come before the next SAARC Summit, when the seven heads of government review the status of children. This summit meeting (to be held in Dhaka, probably in April 1993) will be the first occasion for the SAARC leaders to jointly consider their national plans for child survival and development.

per cent respectively), have apportioned a large share of the total World Summit goals resources to the education sector (67 per cent and 86 per cent respectively). In the case of Sri Lanka, the NPA clearly recognises the achievements in enrolment rates and lays emphasis on the improvement in quality of education and on reduction in drop-out rates. In sharp contrast, Pakistan has allocated only 18 per cent of its World Summit goals resources to the education sector even though, in terms of achievement, it has an enrolment rate of only 79 per cent and a completion rate of just 43 per cent. Sri Lanka and Maldives have completion rates of 90 per cent and 75 per cent respecitvely.

On the other hand, Pakistan has given considerable importance to the provision of drinking water and sanitation facilities. As much as 70.7 per cent of its total outlays have been reserved for this purpose, even though almost two-thirds of its population already has access to these facilities. At the same time, Bangladesh which has been able to provide safe drinking water to 80 per cent but sanitation facilities to only six per cent of its population, has a water and sanitation programme which would absorb only 3.5 per cent of its total World Summit goals resources.

The financial outlays and their breakup over the different sectors reveal not only the kind of programmes that the countries have drawn up to meet the targets set by them but also the kind of commitments that they are ready to make in order to translate these programmes into reality. In this context, the Indian NPA appears to be a hastily drawn-up document. Following the classification of targets as set out in the World Summit Declaration, the document is more of a general statement of intent than a carefully worked out strategy for the achievement of goals. Nowhere does the Plan mention the present status, in each area, the goals or their modifications as accepted by India in a systematic and cohesive manner. There is no real attempt to set out the material, organisational or financial requirements that an effort to achieve the World Summit goals would require. ■

DOCUMENT

Colombo Resolution on Children

PREAMBLE

1. Pursuant to the decision of the Sixth SAARC Summit, we, the Ministers of SAARC Member-States and other representatives of the government and the people, assembled in Colombo on September 16-18, 1992 on behalf of the 410 million children of South Asia.

2. Our meeting of Colombo follows the first SAARC Conference on South Asian Children in 1986 in New Delhi and the subsequent SAARC Summits. Consequent upon these consultations within the SAARC framework there has been considerable regional cooperation in the area of child development and some improvement in the conditions of children. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the World Summit for Children 1990 and the respective National Plans of Action constitute our frame of reference for regional cooperation on a range of policy, legal, technical and operational issues.

3. We hereby reaffirm our commitment to the objectives and goals envisaged in our National Plans of Action, drawn up within the overall framework of the World Declaration on Children. We pledge to cooperate with each other in the region for the survival, development and protection of the South Asian Child. We consider this to be an integral part of, and a first charge on our respective governments efforts at improving the lives of the people of the region.

THE CHALLENGE

4. A quarter of the world's children live in South Asia. Everyday many of the children of our region are exposed to the scourge of poverty and economic deprivation. Everyday, many of them still needlessly die or suffer from diseases caused by lack of clean drinking water or inadequate sanitation. Of the 35 million children born each year, over 5 million die before the age of five. The majority of the survivors, particularly girls, do not develop to a fraction of their potential. About a quarter of maternal deaths in the world occur in South Asia.

5. The unacceptable health, nutrition, educational and social conditions of a large proportion of the

children and their exposure to abuse, violence and environmental hazards and assumption of adult responsibilities, like motherhood at a tender age and child labour, are some of the most urgent challenges in the region. These are challenges that South Asia's political leaders must face.

THE OPPORTUNITY

6. In the traditional socio-cultural environment of South Asia, the value placed on children is a common uniting factor among the nations of the region. We have today the means and the knowledge to greatly diminish the suffering of children, to promote their full development and to make them aware of their rights. The National Plan of Action which has been prepared by each Government provides the means for removing obstacles to the improvement of the condition of our children.

7. There is a wealth of experience in every country of the region in child development and related spheres. We have experience of success in many parts of the region. Government and non-government organisations have already demonstrated results despite financial constraints and other impediments.

8. The goals for children can be achieved in quality and in time if, and only if, the institutional arrangements, organisational requirements and resource commitments are more specifically identified and better assured, in a joint endeavour by all segments of society within each country, and between the countries of South Asia. In a development perspective, the 410 million children constitute South Asia.

TASKS AHEAD

9. We renew our commitment to achieving the seven major goals and the cluster of essential supportive goals for South Asia as contained in our respective National Plans of Action. In doing so, we emphasise the closer inter-linkages among them, and between them and social concerns like protection of the natural life-support system, economic opportunities, gender equality and poverty reduction. The greater, therefore, is the need to approach the goals at two levels:

a) The tasks should be defined in manageable terms to be achieved in a sequential build-up of inter-goal momentum, according to country-specific and community-specific need and urgency.

b) Concurrently, inter-country cooperation should enhance the feasibility of achieving goals which emerge as priorities.

10. We recognise the goals which were considered difficult, have proved attainable by concerted action by the government and the community. The experience gained in providing safe water and in universal immunisation gives us the confidence that the goals, however formidable they appear, are amenable to phased action.

11. We urge that the National Plans of Action be reinforced in a regional perspective by taking into consideration the following set of illustrative goals in order to catalyse and accelerate progress towards the achievement of the seven major as well as the supportive goals. Some of these goals are:

a) Primary Education:

— access to, and enrolment in primary education for at least 80 per cent of boys and 75 per cent of girls, and completion of primary education by at least 50 per cent of girls as well as boys by 1995;

— reduction of adult and adolescent illiteracy from the 1990 levels by 25 per cent by 1995.

b) Diarrhoea Control: universal use of oral rehydration therapy

MAJOR GOALS FOR THE YEAR 2000

As agreed by the World Summit for Children and all SAARC States

☐ Reduction of infant and under-5 child mortality rate by one-third, or to 50 and 70 per 1000 live births respectively, whichever is less.

☐ Reduction of maternal mortality ratio by half.

☐ Reduction by half of severe and moderate malnutrition among under-5 children.

☐ Universal access to safe drinking water and to sanitary means of excreta disposal.

☐ Universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of the relevant age group.

☐ Reduction of adult illiteracy rate by half, with emphasis on female literacy (age-group to be country-specific).

☐ Improved protection of children in especially difficult circumstances.

for home-based treatment of diarrhoea and universal access to oral rehydration salts by 1996.

c) Iodine Deficiency Disorders: universal access to iodised salt by 1995.

d) Reducing Gender Disparity: progressive reduction of gender disparity in all the goal-related indicators.

e) Family Size:
— raising the minimum female age of marriage to at least 18 years.
— access to family planning services in order to increase contraceptive prevalence rate to 50 per cent by 1996.

f) Child Labour: progressive and accelerated elimination of child labour.

g) Drinking Water: access to safe drinking water to not less than three-fourths of both rural and urban population by 1996 and universal access by 2000.

h) Guinea Worm Disease: eradication by 1995.

i) Immunisation: reducing vaccine preventable disease, and elimination of neo-natal tetanus by 1995 and eradication of poliomyelitis by 2000.

j) Maternal Mortality: reduction of the maternal mortality ratio by half of the 1990 level.

k) Nutrition: between 1990 and the year 2000, reduction of severe and moderate malnutrition among under five children by half.

STRATEGIES

12. Strategies for achieving the goals for children should be integral to the total development strategy. This would include devolution of power to local government bodies, increasing the proportion of resources allocated to human development, reduction of poverty and organising and empowering communities to meet basic needs. The cluster of goals for children including operational strategies should fit into this overall approach.

13. Human development, of which the goals for children are central, require, in the South Asian context, a development strategy which would provide an alternative to the conventional pathway to economic growth. Current policy shifts towards the free market economy and structural adjustments require expansion of social safety programmes for children and women.

14. The political system should provide space for community-led local planning. The central principle of community-government partnership in a common cause has to be deliberately promoted. Towards this aim two steps are essential:

a) communities, especially of the poor and involving the effective participation of women, have to be assisted in mobilising.

Resource Allocations in South Asian NPAs

(In US $ millons)

	HEALTH	EDUCATION	WATER SUPPLY & SANITATION	SOCIAL SERVICE	TOTAL
SRI LANKA (1992-97)	20.19 *(3.8%)*	364.5 *(67.0%)*	151.49 *(27.9%)*	6.78 *(1.2%)*	543.7 *(100.00%)*
BHUTAN (upto 1997)	159.17 *(25.3%)*	306.91 *(48.7%)*	164.01 *(26.0%)*	*	630.09 *(100.0%)*
NEPAL (1992-2001)	303.03 *(16.1%)*	762.89 *(40.6%)*	605.3 *(32.2%)*	206.55 *(11.0%)*	1877.77 *(100.0%)*
PAKISTAN (upto 2000)	763.73 *(11.2%)*	1239 *(18.1%)*	4830 *(70.7%)*	3.57 *(0.05%)*	6836.30 *(100.0%)*
BANGLADESH (1990-95)	288.00 *(23.5%)*	891 *(72.9%)*	44 *(3.5%)*	*	1223 *(100.0%)*
MALDIVES (1993-95)	130.65 *(11.5%)*	975 *(86.02%)*	*	27.79 *(2.5%)*	1133.44 *(100.0%)*
INDIA (upto 2000)	*	*	*	*	*

Conversion rates from International Finacial Statistical Year Book, IMF, 1992
*No resource allocations indicated in NPA document

Indicators for SAARC Member-States

Indicator/ Country (yr)	India	Sri Lanka	Pakistan	Bangladesh	Nepal	Bhutan	Maldives
I Child Health							
(i) U5MR	126** (1991)	23 (1992)	162 (1991)	184 (1990)	165 (1990)	195 (1990)	148 (1990)
(ii) IMR	84** (1991)	19 (1992)	106 (1991)	110 (1990)	107 (1990)	125 (1990)	34 (1990)
II Maternal Mortality	40* (1992)	0.58 (1991)	50 (1990)	70 (1990)	85 (1990)	77 (1990)	2 (1990)
III U5 Malnutrition	52.5% (1992)	35% (1992)46	15% wasted 46% stunted (1985)	90% (1990)	50% (1990)	38% (1990)	40% (1990) (under 3 years)
IV Water & Sanitation							
(i) Access to Safe Drinking Water (% POP)	U 83.3% R 73.9% (1990)	67% (1992)	U 80% R 80% (1990)	80% (1990)	U 66% R 35% T 37% (1990)	25% (1990)	U 98% R 55% (1990)
(ii) Access to Sanitary Facilities (% POP)	U 45.9% R 2.45% (1990)	0.61 (1992)	U 55% R 10% (1990)	6% (1990)	U 34% R 3% T 6% (1990)	62% (1990)	U 100% R 2% (1990)
V Education (Primary)							
(i) Enrolment Rate (gross)	101% (1991)	94% (1992)	M 79% F 45% (1990)	77% (1990)	64% (1990)	67% (1990)	115% (1990)
(ii) Completion Rate	55% (1992)	90% (1992)	43% (1990)	35% (1990)	27% (1990)	35% (1990)	75% (1990)
VI Adult Literacy	52.11% (1990) M 63.9% M 39.4%	M 87% F 83% (1990)	M 43% F 19.6% (1990)	35% (1990)	35% (1990)	30% (1990)	98.9% (1990)

U-URBAN R-RURAL T-TRIBAL

Source: NPA of different Govts, SAARC Conference: Colombo 1992.
*from Perspectives on Children in South Asia, A statistical profile. UNICEF, Kathmandu 1992.
**from State of the World's Children Report 1993, UNICEF.

empowering and activating themselves as viable groups in responding to the needs of children.

b) a system of effective local self-government has to be in place in order to take charge of both responsibilities and resources for achieving the community's goals for children. Powers required for this purpose must devolve to the local level.

15. Advocacy programmes have to be developed through media and other resources, so that families, communities, professionals and NGOs can be motivated towards the goals for the survival, development and protection of children.

16. To achieve maximum effectiveness there should be special focus on difficult and disadvantaged areas where services for children should be directed to the most needy.

17. In order to improve programme implementation optimal use of existing resources—financial, technical and managerial—should be ensured so as to reduce duplication, overlap and wastage.

18. The Member-States should formulate an Annual Action Plan on major goals and supporting goals, disaggregated by compact administrative units. They should share experiences in addressing common problems, finding solutions and developing methods of effective implementation. We urge each country to annually review and update the Annual Action Plan as a dynamic tool of country-wide action.

19. National information systems should be strengthened urgently. In this context we emphasise the need for effective compulsory registration of birth, marriage and death in all SAARC Member-States.

20. We urge that a nutrition surveillance system be established and programmes and strategies for vastly improving the nutrition status be implemented.

21. Member-States should recognise the primary importance of the family and the household in the provision of services to children.

22. The intersecting needs of women and children and the contribution of women to the survival of the family, should be recognised. Member-States should therefore develop programmes for improving the situation of the girl child and the status of women in their countries while moving towards elimination of all forms of discrimination against women by empowering them.

23. We urge a holistic approach, through converging services, taking full advantage of the inter-linkages between the goals.

RESOURCES

24. It is imperative that current levels of budgetary allocations for the social sector be enhanced. Norms could be evolved for determining the proportion of social sector investment in overall development outlay.

25. The first claim on resources should be the essential needs of children. Investment in children should be a non-negotiable political commitment.

26. Unproductive and wasteful drain of scarce resources on armaments and conflicts eats into national budgets and worsens the condition of children; it must therefore be avoided.

27. External resources, financial and technical, should be mobilised wherever appropriate for achieving the goals for children under the National Plans of Action.

28. The private sector should be encouraged to support community initiatives in the provision of facilities for children, as a part of its social responsibility.

29. This Resolution draws upon the reports of the Working Groups on the seven themes:

— Child survival and safe motherhood (including small family)
— Mother and Child Nutrition
— Basic Education
— Safe Water, Sanitation and the Environment
— The Rights of the Child
— Socio-political strategy to achieve the goals
— Poverty reduction and economic base for the family

30. We express our appreciation to His Excellency Ranasinghe Premadasa, President of Sri Lanka, for his inspiring address and for providing guidance on measures to be taken for the survival, protection and development of children and mothers of the region. We also welcome the statement of Mr. James P. Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF, and the support extended by UNICEF in making this conference possible. We also express our gratitude for the warm and gracious hospitality extended by the government and people of Sri Lanka.

31. This Resolution is submitted for endorsement by the Seventh SAARC Summit in Dhaka in December 1992.

32. We call upon the Member-States—their governments, political representatives, non-government organisations, communities and professionals, to join hands in a movement for and with the children to enhance the physical, mental and moral quality of their lives.

Colombo
September 18, 1992

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In Memory of Punjab Revolutionaries (1914-15)—II

RANDHIR SINGH

The author, one of the most successful teachers in Delhi University as a Professor of Political Theory, has now retired from the University. This article is a translation of the author's address at a cultural-cum-political festival, Babean da Mela, *in memory of the martyrs and heroes of the Ghadarite uprising of 1914-15, organised by Desh Bhagat Yadgar Committee at Jalandhar (Punjab) on September 26 and 27, 1992. The first part of this article appeared in* Mainstream *(February 20, 1993). This is the concluding part.*

—Editor

Social reality is invariably much too complex to be *fully* understood or grasped by social theory. Marx's social theory recognised this. His achievement here was to provide what still remains, with all its problems and inadequacies, the best point of entry into understanding the systemic character of social formations by suggesting that a society be viewed as a whole, a historically specific structured interdependence of parts, within which one part, the economy ('the mode of production', or more precisely, 'the economic structure', 'the real basis') in an asymmetry of reciprocal influence, *descisively conditions* every other part or aspect of society, its life, politics, morality, culture, etc. As Raymond Williams has more recently put it:

> It is true that there are forms of material production which always and everywhere precede all other forms (in a society). The enormous theoretical shift introduced by classical Marxism—in saying these are the primary productive activities—was of the most fundamental importance.

Again, if it was scientifically valid for Marx in *Capital* to posit a 'pure' or 'abstract' bourgeois mode of production for the purpose of analysing its basic 'law of motion', he knew that in history there are no 'pure' or 'normal' modes, capitalist or any other; they would be as hard to find in reality as an 'average' man.

Social formations thus remain a most complex affair. And Indian social formation is possibly the most complex in the world, with its continental dimensions and diversities, long, relatively continuous history, colonial legacies, and all sorts of other material and ideological survivals from the past, etc. etc. For understanding the systemic character of this much too complex social formation, two passages from Marx, their different contexts notwithstanding, may still be helpful for their suggestiveness. He wrote:

> In all forms of society there is one specific kind of production which predominates over the rest, whose relations thus assign rank and influence to the others. It is the general illumination which bathes all the other colours and modifies their particularity. It is a particular ether which determines the specific gravity of every being which has materialised within it.

Again, elsewhere, he spoke of countries which:

> Suffer not only from the development of capitalist production but also from the incompleteness of that development. Alongside of modern evils, a whole series of inherited evils oppress us, arising from the passive survival of antequated modes of production with their inevitable train of social and political anachronisms. We suffer not only from the living but from the dead.

Thus in these fortyfive post-colonial years, if capitalist development has occurred and become increasingly pre-eminent in Indian economy as a whole, it has also been a specifically Indian form of belated capitalist development, some 'strange kind of corrupted capitalist growth' as Romesh Thapar once put it, which has produced its own ruling class—the industrial bourgeoisie and rich farmers and around them a coalition of other main beneficiaries, among them the landlords, professionals in the public and private sectors including higher echelons of civil and military establishments, organised white collar workers and 'the political class' which, even as it serves as a varied broker in the system, has turned politics itself into an almost hereditary, a lumpen but very lucrative, capital-intensive business.

Just as, before 1947, the structural logic of British imperialism meant the accumulation of wealth in England and poverty in India, the structural logic of Indian capitalism is most manifest today in the unequal and uneven development in the country over these fortyfive years, in the emergence of the now universally admitted 'two nations'—the Indian 'twin-nation' (K.N. Raj), 'socio-economic *dualism*' which is so very 'corrosive' (Sukhamoy Chakravarty), 'this dualism in Indian society' which is threatening to become 'explosive', the 'two Indias' of Rajni Kothari, V.P. Singh, R.K. Hegde *et al.*, etc.—and a certain 'internal colonialism' in the more backward parts of the country. Its historical specificity has given it a strong comprador and lumpen character, presided over as it is by a bourgeoisie born old without ever having known youth, with none of the possible virtues of youth and all the vices of old age. Here all the exploitative and oppressive evils of belated capitalist development, semi-feudalism, bureaucratised and corrupt state sector and bloated bourgeois politics daily enter into and reinforce each other.

The recent turn from a state-supported to an explicitly market-friendly capitalism only means that the predatory as well as comprador and lumpen nature of Indian capitalism will now manifest itself even more openly. Higher growth rates are promised, but when they do materialise it will only be a case of 'the economy is doing fine, the people are not' as a President of Brazil's military government once put it. The Harvard economist, Robert Reich's, phrase, 'the secession of the successful', well expresses the structural logic of capitalism as a market economy. The new economic policy means that 'the successful' of our 'national economy', 'a narrow section of Indian society' in V.K.R.V. Rao's words, have, like their counterparts elsewhere in the capitalist world, decided to openly secede from the rest of their countrymen.

Almost everyone in our country these days, from the hack politician to the so-called intellectual, on the Left as much as on the Right, is busy urging almost everyone else to join some mythical 'national mainstream', mythical because nobody tells us what it is and where it flows. Accompanying this urging is deep anxiety and concern about 'national integration', there are desperate daily exhortations to promote and strengthen it. What is forgotten is that today every aspect of social life in India bears the signature of this historically specific Indian form of capitalist development—its mark is there on our morality, our culture, our politics, on everything, everywhere. Therefore, if there is in, deed a 'national mainstream' it is one which, bearing the impress of India's corrupt and corrupting, somewhat lumpen capitalist development, is increasingly a dirty mainstream—corrupt, communal and criminalised, a repressively homogenising mainstream. Again, the fact to be deplored is not that we are not integrated but that we are integrated the *capitalist* way which, with its unequal and uneven development, its 'two nations', 'internal colonialism', and much else by way of exploitation and oppression of the people, carries within it strong disintegrative tendencies. Herein lies the basic reason why today all the divides and fissures of Indian society, around class, caste or religion, language, region, ethnicity or nationality, etc. have become sharpened and potentially explosive.

◆

THE Indian state, given the economic weakness and lack of legitimacy of the post-colonial bourgeoisie, has certainly acted as 'the executor of the economic necessities of the national situation', as Engels once phrased it, much in the manner of the state in France with Louis Bonaparte, or in Germany with Bismarck, or the Czarist state in Russia. It has facilitated, as V.K.R.V. Rao pointed out, 'a type of capitalist development in the interests of a narrow section of Indian society'. But contrary to the nationalist hopes and liberal expectations, it has failed to serve as an agent of equity and distributive justice for the Indian people. If, nevertheless, something has got done for them in response to the demands of 'democratic politics' or to gain legitimacy, it has not to any significant degree curbed the structurally inherent predatory logic of India's capitalist development. In fact even of the funds directly allocated for poverty alleviation, only 'the leakage', a bare fifteen per cent, has reached the people, as Rajiv Gandhi told us, and he, if anyone, certainly knew. While there has been an increasing use of 'state as private property', and any kind of power within the state as a means of 'rapid private accumulation', now, with the turn to a 'free' market capitalism even the paltry effort aimed at equity or distributive justice, indeed the very pretence of 'growth with justice', is being abandoned. And the Indian state has all along served, and continues to serve, as an instrument of coercion and repression against the common Indian people.

Here I would like to suggest that it is not adequate to describe the state as the Communist Left traditionally does, primarily in terms of 'an instrument' or 'an organ'—this, at best, grasps only one, albeit an important, aspect of the modern state. We need to recognise the obviously non-monolithic nature, on the one hand, of class domination where, almost invariably, what we have is an alliance or a coalition of ruling classes with real, even if, non-antagonistic, internal conflict of interests, and on the other, of the material and ideological structures of the modern state that are today far too many and massively diverse and scattered all over vertically and horizontally—which, incidentally, makes the state itself a possible 'arena of class struggle'. The metaphor of 'instrument' or 'organ' being very partial, can be quite misleading. It fails, for example, to make sense of the role of a Bonaparte or Bismarck or the Czarist state as mentioned above, and it certainly obscures the important possibility of the state's relative autonomy from any given ruling class or classes, which a state often needs to have precisely in order to manage and promote the common interest of the ruling classes as a whole.

This is not to deny that different structures of the state, its institutions and apparatuses, at a particular point of time may be in the hands of a particular fragment of ruling class or classes, who may use them to promote particular interest or even settle intra- or inter-class quarrels or conflicts. But a proper Marxist view of the state must see it as the organiser of society in the interests of the class-exploitative structure taken as a whole—and this includes, as Gramsci put it, 'the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules'. This is indeed how the Indian state has functioned over these fortyfive years; it is above all in this sense that it has been and continues to be a class-state. It is thus that if India's 'national economy' has been anti-people over these fortyfive years, so has been India's 'national state'. The state in India, far from being a part of the solution, is itself a part of the problem.

All those who seek a genuine radical or revolutionary transformation of Indian society, including the best of those involved in 'grassroots' activism or 'new social movement' as they are called, will do well to recognise this harsh fact—the class nature and power of the Indian state. Those who would leave the state alone, as a certain kind of radicalism suggests, need to know that the state will not leave *them* alone. The question of political power, the people's power in the state, the struggle for 'political supremacy' or 'state power' of the exploited and the oppressed, is central to any struggle for a better life for the Indian people.

Of course, dangerous aberrations or departures notwithstanding, we have had democracy and democratic politics so far. And democracy in India is, whatever its limitations and however weak or fragile, a hard-won achievement of the Indian people, and they certainly need it, more than the ruling classes do. It has certainly served to somewhat curb the authoritarian political logic of the Indian economic system, and brought benefits, however marginal these may have been, even to the common Indian people. They certainly need to struggle to defend it, to preserve and expand it. And they have so struggled all these years, as best as they could—the threats to democracy having invariably emanated from one or the other political formation of the ruling classes, often from their internecine struggle for power in the state. Yet, as Bagehot observed, with obvious satisfaction, in an earlier, more honest age:

> Democracy is the way to give the people the greatest illusion of power while allowing them the smallest amount in reality.

And this is indeed how it has worked in India. Obviously, democracy has not meant effective political power for the Indian people. Within almost two decades of Indian freedom and democracy, even so sympathetic a scholar as Gunnar Myrdal, a personal friend of Nehru, wrote of 'the new government's role as the successor to the British raj', of 'the gulf between rulers and ruled', and the life-style and conduct of the new rulers which 'encouraged the view that political independence had done little more than displace a foreign with a native privileged group'. Pointing out that 'India is ruled by a select group of upper class citizens who use their political power to secure their privileged positions' and that 'the power struggle has mainly remained one between individuals and groups in the upper class in the broader sense', he concluded:

> Democracy has not enabled the majority of poor people to grasp, and organise themselves for utilising, political power to advance their own interests.

In 1973, V.K.R.V.Rao spoke of 'a political alliance of the intermediate classes with the upper classes, resorting to socialist ideology only to win mass support but using all levers of power to facilitate a type of capitalist development in the interest of a narrow section of Indian society', and fifteen years later he most emphatically stated that so far as 'the poor and deprived sections of the people' are concerned, 'parliamentary democracy has not been able to meet the challenge'.

How, despite democracy, 'reality' of power has remained with the ruling classes not only in India but elsewhere too, how 'the taming of democracy' as it may be called, occurs, is not my concern just now. Suffice it to state here that this 'happening', the wide gulf between people and political power that democracy has come to mean, is not only universally recognised in contemporay capitalist-democratic systems, it has been defended and actually celebrated in bourgeois social science as 'democracy' itself. With a slight exaggeration—but then all science and art is an exaggeration—one could even argue that the most important if not the sole discovery of modern political science, its ultimate wisdom on the subject is: if you want to have democracy, or to save it, keep the people away from it! Though, in fairness to Aristotle, I must add that he had discovered and said as much, far more honestly and intelligently, more than two thousand years ago. Be that as it may, the relevant point here is that where the people have failed, the rulers everywhere have succeeded eminently, they have been able to use democracy to advance their own interests. This has happened because, putting it most briefly, democracy is ruling classes in two ways: it helps ensure their hegemony in society, legitimising their class domination as never before, for now they exploit the people and rule over them with their own consent; and it also provides the ruling classes with an impersonal, non-arbitrary device for articulating and resolving their inevitable internal conflict of interests, even as the democratic state promotes these interests as a whole.

This two-fold usefulness of democracy to the ruling classes has been central to India's 'democratic politics' since independence. In the earlier Nehru era, the golden-age of the post-colonial state, this politics was conducted by their political formations, the dominant Congress-I and the rest, more or less as a 'Hindu Undivided Family', on the basis of a working 'consensus', a 'balance' of power and interests among them, the beneficiaries of the system as a whole. But after the economic crisis of the mid-sixties, and subject to the continuing constraints of the economic situation since then, the 'family' has badly divided up, the earlier 'consensus' or 'balance' has been lost and the beneficiaries have been engaged in an utterly unscrupulous, no-holds-barred infighting for power and pelf in the state, where it is truly the end justifying the means, literally any means. It is thus that the inept and myopic rulers, making bad choices and pursuing worse policies, have been producing intractable problems for themselves and one tragedy after another for the people. (This is, for example, where the genesis of the Punjab tragedy has to be located, though it has since developed several autonomous dimensions of its own.) Perhaps the rulers can indulge in this reckless and fratricidal 'politicians' politics' (*la politique politicienne*, Malraux's phrase) which has much undermined the legitimacy of both their politics and the political system as a whole because they face, as yet, no significant threat of a 'people's politics' from below.

If India's 'national economy' has been generating any number of potentially explosive issues, the 'national politics' pursued by the ruling classes in recent years has been regularly turning these issues into problems, problems into running sores, and these sores into tragedies for the Indian people. Disastrous in its consequences for the people as it is, the ruling class politics has in fact become the most potent threat today to their own much touted 'unity and integrity' of India. Years ago, apropos Punjab, I had advanced a proposition which, more than vindicated by the developments since, still holds. I had written,

> It is fashionable these days to speak of India as 'a nation-in-the making'. One might add that if you leave it to the ruling classes India may well be on its way to be 'a nation-in-the-unmaking'.

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SUCH being the situation, nationalism or a nationalist perspective today—with its wide array of supportive concepts like 'national economy' or 'national development', 'nation-building' or 'state-building', 'national mainstream', 'national integration' or 'unity and integrity of the nation', etc.—conceals the essential character of Indian social reality as it has come to be as a result of an India-specific capitalist development, its basic structural contradictions, its economic exploitation and old and new social oppressions, its 'two-nations' and 'internal colonialism', its vulgarisation of our life, morality and culture and, in many ways more important, the corrupt and criminal, communal and lumpenised, disastrously bankrupt national bourgeois politics spawned by this capitalist development. Nationalism not only serves to cover up, or provide alibis for, the historic default of the post-colonial ruling classes in India, it increasingly turns into a legitimising ideology for these classes in need of defending and safeguarding their economic and political domination. By obscuring the most basic division in our society, between *we* (the people) and *they* (who oppress and exploit them), nationalism permits the latter even to get away with plain lies to justify and gather support for their policies and politics. Witness, for example, the lie that was the well-orchestrated national chorus to launch the recent class-interests dictated surrender to global capitalism: 'the country has been living beyond its means'. For a good majority of our people have simply no means at all to live, and most others nothing much to indulge any 'living beyond'. The nationalist lie provides a cover for those whom have indeed been living beyond this country's poor means for long and are now set on continuing to do so via the 'free' market, those who the Latin Americans have learnt to call 'anti-nation within the nation'.

Nationalism is certainly being used by the ruling classes and their diverse political formations today to manipulate the common people ideologically in support or defence of their crisis-ridden class-politics and class-rule. More the crisis deepens, Marxist, class perspective, is not the only reason for the Communist Left's surrender to bourgeois politics and its failure to develop an independent, alternative politics for the Indian people. There are other reasons too. For example, participation in parliamentary politics, which poses so many still unresolved, almost intractable, problems for those seeking a revolutionary transformation of the Indian society. If as a general principle such participation is absolutely necessary at the present historical juncture, not only are exceptions to it admissible, but it always needs to be subordinated to extra-parliamentary class and mass politics—something never easy to achieve. This apart, parliamentary politics even as it corrupts in so many ways, exercises a most 'civilising' influence on revolutionaries as Laski was fond of pointing out. It is significant, perhaps also symbolic, of the tragedy of the Communist Left, that, when looking for 'the most outstanding parliamentarians' or models of 'parliamentary virtues' and 'democratic rectitude', 'ornaments' of Lok or Rajya Sabha, or even 'statesmen' of Indian politics, for their awards and honours, the custodians of bourgeois politics and their media have increasingly come to discover them among the Communist leaders. And even as these leaders are happy garnering their awards and accolades, the people are losing faith in India's parliamentary democracy and their own followers moving away from 'the Party' to bourgeois politics of one kind or another! When the bourgeoisie begins to find the Communist leaders adorable, perhaps it is time for them to stop and take another look at themselves and their politics. But this is not the subject I want to pursue here. I would only like to deal with another reason which is in a way linked to and supplements the surrender to bourgeois politics on the question of nationalism. I am referring to the philosophical surrender on the part of the Communist Left to the dominant bourgeois mode of thinking, which Engels chose to describe as the 'metaphysical mode of thought'. Writing on the subject in *Anti-Dühring*, Engels noticed that 'at first sight (the metaphysical) mode of thought seems to us extremely plausible because it is the mode of thought of common sense'. But he found it do be 'one-sided, limited, abstract' because it studies things 'in their isolation, detached from the whole vast interconnection of things; and therefore not in their motion, but in their repose; not in their life, but in their death'. He added:

> In considering individual things it loses sight of their connections; in contemplating their existence it forgets their coming into being and passing away; in looking at them at rest it leaves their motion out of account;...it cannot see the woods for the trees.

This is the mode of thought which has come to govern the theory and practice of the Communist Left. And this philosophical surrender has inevitably led to a political surrender, a surrender to bourgeois politics.

It is a mark of the dominance of the ruling class politics in India over these fortyfive years, after an early, much confused, communist protest and the surrender and suppression of the great Telegana struggle, that it has always succeeded in effectively defining and pre-empting the terrain of Indian politics, setting the parameters of intellectual discourse and political action, imposing its own issues and choices, concepts, language codes and forms of politics on others—in the process appropriating, marginalising, and suppressing whenever necessary, those of any kind of alternative radical or revolutionary politics, which has thus survived only at the fringes of Indian polity. What I want to suggest is that it is the dominance of 'the metaphysical mode of thought' even with those on the Left who otherwise profess the Marxist, that is, the dialectical mode, which has over the years helped the ruling classes to thus define and pre-empt the terrain of Indian politics for their own purposes. They have posed the issues in this mode, asked the questions accordingly, and secured the answers they wanted to have. For example, this is how it has been in the recent crisis-ridden years:

Are you for the Sikh/Kashmiri/ULFA militants or the nation? For secessionism or the unity and integrity of India? For violence or democratic politics? For the Congress-I Government or that of the Janata Party or National Front? For communalism or secularism? For reservations or against them?' and so on. It is not difficult to see that in each case the choices are really foreclosed in the sense that whatever the answer, it serves one or the other kind of ruling class politics. The way the issues are posed consistently, ignores the larger socio-historical context and deeper determinant interconnections, dissociates the issues from any consideration of socio-economic structures, class domination, or ruling class politics, and thus ensures that radical or revolutionary choices simply do not come up as answers, as real historical possibilities. Given the 'specific narrow-mindedness' (Engels) of the essentially a histocial 'metaphyscial mode of thought', a revolutionary strategic aim and political practice geared to it is impossible. The Left has simply failed to develop an independent and alternative politics of its own.

The failure to see Indian social reality in its 'whole vast interconnections', to recognise its issues, problems and processes in their *real* relationships with the 'economic basis' and with each other and 'the whole', 'the structured interdependence of parts' that is the Indian society—which recognition is basic for a revolutionary strategy—this failure is obscured by essentially *imaginary* substitute relationships of 'a national whole' that a nationalist perspective postulates for the Indian society. Once, during the Nehru era, the era of post-independence possibilities, this postulation was most apparent and very successful too. Working with concepts of 'national freedom', 'national development', 'national consensus' and so on, the 'nationalist discourse' even appropriated the concepts of 'socialism' and 'social transformation', obscured the class character of the compromise and settlement of 1947 and the consequent reality of a state-supported India-specific, capitalist development, and marginalised all radical or revolutionary thought and action. In more recent years when the memory of 'national freedom' has almost faded away, 'national development' is seen to be not what it was supposed to be, 'national consensus' survives only as a yearning and the loudness of the 'nationalist discourse' both hides and exposes a waning of nationalism, it is the metaphysical mode of thought that effectively supplements the nationalist obscuring of *real* relationships of social reality in India to ensure continued defining and pre-empting of the terrain of Indian politics for the ruling classes. Postulation of *imaginary* relations of nationalism is today meaningful primarily as an ideological device in the service of the Indian ruling classes. For the people it can be meaningful only if the postulation is in terms of a struggle against the 'anti-nation within the nation', or of 'rescuing the nation' from its ruling classes. But this, as I have already suggested, is no longer a national but a class perspective, a perspective of revolutionary class struggle.

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THE Communist Left needs to move away from its simplistic ahistorical nationalism and the metaphysical mode of thought and return to Marxism in order to recover its essential character as a revolutionary movement. Let it not remain content with operating on the terrain of bourgeois politics only, responding to the issues it presents, accepting the choices it offers, and succumbing to the corruption of consciousness all this involves, in the process not only getting marginalised again and again but also losing the revolutionary elan and commitment that defines it as Left. It is time the Communist Left sought to establish and function on its own terrain, the terrain of independent class-based people's politics which even as it confronts bourgeois politics on the latter's terrian, knows how to pose *its own issues*, *its own way*, before the people, present them with genuine choices, and, most important, organise them to fight around these issues, in defence of their own choices, for not some phoney electoral gains but real political advance.

The constituency of active struggle for socialism, or, more precisely, for a society in transition to socialism, is still very large in this country, and it will grow as the new economic policy of the ruling classes gets underway: major Communist Parties, needing to break out of the quarantine that parliamentary politics has become for them; smaller communist formations, People's War Group and others, bearing the full brunt of the state's violence and struggling to reach beyond their limited strongholds; growing movements like the Indian People's Front, successfully making space for their refreshingly more adequate revolutionary politics; socialists, who are still not irretrievably lost to anto-communism or bourgeois politics; the best of activist groups, 'new social movements' including those around ecology, and others from among the long disadvantaged but now awakening sections of our people—minor nationalities, dalits, tribals, women, religious and ethnic minorities, and so on—who will out of their own experience come to recognise the need to articulate their struggles with a class-based people's politics; Shankar Guha Niyogis and A.K. Roys scattered all over this country, carrying on against the heaviest of odds; militant sections from among the workers, peasants and intelligentsia, looking for a more positive and hopeful politics; and many more...The need is for the Communist Left to regain clarity about its strategic aim, develop its own alternative terrain of people's politics and thus recover the moral elan of a revolutionary movement actively struggling for the interests of the common Indian people. This is a difficult task but not impossible. This is what the situation demands as does the heroic revolutionary tradition of the Ghadarites whose heir the Communist Left claims to be and, I would add, which it today needs to be worthy of.

While in the Party I always had a feeling that, with its rather scientistic view of Marxism, it was somewhat wanting in its treatment of revolutionaries and the revolutionary traditions it inherited, in imbibing the revolutionary morals and culture that the Ghadarites, Bhagat Singh's comrades and different streams of 'revolutionary terrorism' brought to the movement. And the feeling has persisted. These traditions were used instrumentally to gain prestige, and what little was imbibed seems to have been lost somewhere along the way in the movement's progress on the reformist path. While the young Ghadarites grew into *Babas* and simultaneously into giants of human beings in their revolutionary commitment, their heirs seem to have dwindled into pigmies lost on the terrain of bourgois politics. This, like so much else in today's communist movement, may yet change. One always hopes.

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POSSIBILITIES of a change for the better are far more open today than ever before. The new turn in ruling class policies and the worldwide crisis of the communist movement together provide not only an occasion for the movement to undertake a serious self-critical review of its theory and practice but also an opportunity to break away from the past and recover itself as a genuine revolutionary movement.

The Indian ruling classes have decided, notwithstanding their internal conflict of interests which is always there, through the state power currently operated by their major political formation, the Congress-I, to shift from a government-supported to a more explicitly market-friendly capitalism. Product of a 'dead-end' crisis caused by previous developments, especially the policies pursued in recent years, the shift, an almost 'natural' progress for Indian capitalism, has been facilitated by the defeat of the Soviet Union in the Cold War and its eventual disintegration. The Indian ruling classes have lost the manoeuvrability that the contention ~~between~~ two superpowers provided them and made them more vulnerable to the pressure and demands of the dominant global capitalism. Given the strong comprador and lumpen strain inherent in their character, they have succumbed and opted for what may well turn out to be a junior partnership within the global capitalist system. Giving in to the dictates of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, the Indian ruling classes have decided, as we have already noticed, to openly 'secede' from the Indian people.

But this 'secession of the successful', in Robert Reich's words, has at least one advantage for the common Indian people, 'the unsuccessful' of Indian society. To the extent the new policies get implemented, they will clarify as nothing else could, the real issues of Indian economy and politics. In the new dispensation, even as a 'free' market will lead to greater disproportionalities within the Indian economy, sharpening and revealing its basic contradictions as never before, the turning away of the state even from its 'socialist' rhetoric and symbolic concern for equity and distributive justice will further undermine such legitimacy as the system has. The globalising of Indian economy and therefore its politics may in its ultimate outcome well confront the people with the choice: socialism or peripheralisation within the global capitalist system. In such a situation the class issues will stand out more clearly, making for more normal class struggles in the Indian society. A class-based people's politics will not only become more necessary but also more possible.

The collapse of the Soviet Union is certainly a setback for popular struggles everywhere. Its 'actually existing socialsim', a deeply deformed version of socialism as it is visualised in classical Marxism, was yet the symbol of a possibility, the possibility of escape from that essentially predatory system, capitalism. Also, while the Soviet Union had long lost interest in any world revolutionary process, for compulsions of its own history and ideological legitimacy, national interest or *realpolitik* or plain superpower politics, it did lend some sort of support to radical or revolutionary movements abroad, and provided a certain degree of support and protection when these movements emerged as revolutionary regimes. But the collapse of the Soviet Union has its advantages too for the revolutionary socialist movements everywhere, including India. They no more need to carry the burden of a deformed and degenerated 'socialism', no longer are they answerable for its ugliness and cruelties—though the burden of a genuine, Marxist explanation of this collapse has still to be carried. But most importantly, there is no 'experienced' or 'prestigious' so-called 'Party of Lenin' now, with its Ulyanovskies and the rest, to mislead them or subordinate the communist movements abroad to the requirements of the 'national interest' or *raison d'etat* of the Soviet Union. No longer for us those parodies of Marxism—the non-capitalist path of development, India's 'progressive' foreign policy and 'reactionary' domestic policy, large-scale radical renovation of India's national movement and its dominant leadership and apologetics for the statecraft of its new rulers, with certificates of anti-imperialism for them merely because their foreign policy interests for the moment coincided with those of the Soviet state, etc. etc.—parodies and the accompanying pseudo-internationalism which, even as they disoriented the movement, provided a whole generation of Party-allied intellectuals and others avenues, together with those provided by peace, friendship, solidarity and sundry such organisations, for racketeering in Left politics and making the best of both the worlds. Certainly, Communists no longer need to—of course if they really don't want to—associate with any and every crook or adventurer from bourgeois politics willing to travel Moscow-wards at Moscow's expense and be certified as 'a progressive', taking away with him some of the progressiveness of the communist movement itself!

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OUR people today face an unprecedented situation, one fraught with most dangerous possibilities. For Communists who would lead their struggles, the road ahead is indeed an unchartered territory, there are no easy solutions or readymade answers, not anymore. But the situation also leaves them free, after a long time, for a better, revolutionary practice of Marxism, for a bold and confident, truly innovative and non-sectarian Left politics in the tradition of revolutionary Marxism. The alternative is a total loss of their identity as a revolutionary movement. They must seize this opportunity. This is what they owe to the revolutionary traditions they claim to have inherited, to the memory of the countless martyrs of their movement, including the Ghadarite revolutionaries. Difficult, near-impossible perhaps, yet not impossible as I said earlier and, again, one always hopes. Or, perhaps, it is now for others to carry forward the tradition of the Ghadarite revolutionaries. ■

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US and Iraq

Clinton Follows Reagan-Bush Policy

BATUK VORA

A catharsis of fury and fear has gripped Iraq again. The "enforcers" of UN resolutions are perhaps heading to a kind of complete and unambiguous destruction of Iraqi military power, taking on many civilians into its blitzkrieg. The focus moves on to the controversy over the American strategy in that region.

The newly sworn-in President Bill Clinton looks like booby-trapped into the Middle East imbroglio, like three of his predecessors. His Baptist belief in redemption of the enemy is overwhelmed by the hardliners. A file on Iraq-Iran is placed on top of all other files on his table. With many of the 29-member Gulf coalition partners cracking and squeaking, Clinton's support to Bush actions may find him in a miserable political condition very soon. Saddam Hussein's hold on Iraq has consolidated on an unprecedented scale. The amount of military pressure that can be brought to bear against Hussein is quite limited.

It seems like a predicament tailor-made for Hussein. How long can a *status quo* of the two-year old embargo be maintained? One top secret noting in the file on Iraq strongly advocates the survial of Saddam Hussein. "Only Saddam Hussein can act as a deterrent against Iran's growing 'menace'..."

Others note, we should end this perpetual drama and capture or kill Hussein. Gregory Grant, an associate of the Centre for Strategic Studies, talks about Rome defeating Carthage in 146 BC its people sold into slavery, the city razed and its site sowed under with salt...Go for a *Carthaginian* victory!

Behind all this, Iran is focussed as a bigger threat. A raid on an Iranian-owned business company in Costa Mesa, California, by the US federal agents and the arrest of the company representative in New Port Beach on January 8, 1993, for trying to "illegally export" a sophisticated $20,000 worth IBM main-frame computer "that can be used for military purpose", appeared more like pointing a gun at Iran than just enforcing an export regulation.

Call it paranoia, obsession, suspicion or perhaps foresight, but Washington has sounded an alarm through this and other means that Iran is emerging as a threat once more to the Gulf and it is buying up weapons of mass destruction and computer technology to dominate the oil-rich Gulf states. The US allies are being admonished not to sell double-use technology to a regime which is bent upon acquiring ballistic missiles, nuclear arms and biclogical weapons. Iraq can be contained under the UN resolutions, but how to face Iran?

Some policy-makers in Washington cite three factors as the sources of "danger" and "subversion" in the post-Cold War era: Islamic fundamentalism— "reminiscent of erstwhile international communism"—mostly reflected in Iran's ideology; Iran's military build-up; and thirdly, as the world's second largest oil producer, Iran's capacity to drag the OPEC to raise oil prices, thereby resulting in a global inflationary spiral. This could threaten American economic recovery. No objective discourse of assessment of this "danger" is found anywhere here.

All signs indicate that Bill Clinton is buying this theory. One of the strategic aims of the Bush decision to send troops to Somalia, supported by Clinton, is to prepare a bridgehead on the Horn of Africa: possible intervention in Sudan where the "Islamic guerrillas" are allegedly being trained by Iran!

Nobody talks in Washington about how beneath the surface of humanitarian action in Somalia, four major American oil companies are quietly sitting over a fortune to explore and exploit tens of millions of acres of the Somali countryside. According to the *Los Angles Times* (January 18), two-thirds of Somalia was allocated to the American oil giants—Conco, Amoco, Chevron and Phillips—under the former Somali dictator, Mohammed Siad Barre, who dragged Somalia to the present tragedy with arms supplied by the Reagan-Bush Administrations in the first place.

Gulf Arms Race

Anyway, before we go into the policy questions, let us recount the facts: Nobody denies that Iran is rearming. According to the Pentagon, Iran is receiving radar-testing devices, navigation and avionics equipment, oscilloscopes, logic analyses, fibre-optic cables, digital switches, high speech computers, remote sensors and jet engines—all of which have military use too.

What is conveniently overlooked here is the degree to which the United States itself has been pouring new weapons and technology in the Gulf region which the Bush Administration promised to make "secure" after the Gulf war. To Saudi Arabia alone, the US supplied $17 billion worth of weapons. The amount from the sale of 72 F-15 fighters is excluded from this figure. Washington is selling 236 tanks for a further sum of $1 billion to Kuwait, 700 more tanks to Egypt. All this would come to more than three times, about $28.5 billion, than both the Iraqi and Iranian acquisition of

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arms.

Actually the main US ally, Saudi Arabia, has been lobbying hard in the West, telling the Gulf war allies of Iran's acquisition of Scud missiles from Korea and possible nuclear weapons from China. A new Russian built plant is being set up in Iran to produce T-72 tanks in Iran, claim the Saudi diplomats.

Also, the first of three submarines is on its way to Iran from Russia. Teheran is going to acquire sophisticated avionics from Air Bus Industries. A proposed sale offer of A-300 passenger jets is being considered.

Despite the US admonitions, the German exports to Iran will reach the $5 billion figure and Italy's $2 billion. But Japan has declared it would not support an embargo on technology transfer to Iran. The US believes it prevented an Argentine sale of nuclear technology to Iran by offering the relevant Argentine company some business deals in the US.

Iran's New Face

Now what does Iran have to say about all this? Is Iran following the same old Ayatollah Khomeini policy of "neither East nor West"? Does an "Islamic revolution" continue to be the battlecry of Iran? Do the Gulf nations really feel insecure from Iran's alleged threat? Is there any real possibility of Iranian Islam spreading to the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union? Why does the US paint Iran as the villain in the world order?

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Iran is presently ruled by the dual leadership of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani—the "spiritual" leader and "secular" President. The old extremist doctrines of the Iranian foreign policy have been overturned by the Gulf war, the end of the Cold War and the breakdown of the Soviet Union. The central theme of the Khomeini era was "neither East nor West". Now the new tenet is "both North and South".

Washington experts seem to have completely overlooked this. The reason is not difficult to see. To control the Gulf oil at any cost, they hardly care about the image of a neo-colonial power America has created for itself. The Arab masses in general hate America. They fall easy prey to the fundamentalists.

Teheran accuses Washington of following a Cold War policy; that it is aspiring to dominate the world as a solo superpower; conspiring to prevent Iran from achieving its legitimate security and economic growth; wants to stop Iran from helping the former Soviet republics of Central Asia and is waging an intense propaganda war against Iran on alleged acquisition of nuclear arms.

Iran's long-term goal in the Gulf is to achieve the security maintained by the littoral powers, not by outsiders. The containment of Iraq and reconciliation with the Gulf nations are two major goals of Rafsanjani. As pragmatic realists, both Khamenei and Rafsanjani are consolidating power at home and balancing it abroad. Thus, the Gulf is "vital" for both Washington and Teheran.

"We do not want a policeman's role in the Gulf and we do not want to humiliate or intimidate other nations around. We should cooperate to build our region's security...Persian Gulf region should become like our common farmland," declared Rafsanjani.

One of the major goals of Iran is to contain Iraq. From the ceasefire of 1988 to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was a period of "no peace, no war" with Iraq. The continued Iraqi occupation of 2600 square miles of Iranian territory and non-repatriation of 100,000 prisoners of war, two-thirds of whom were Iranian nationals, resulted in "resistance in negotiations" with Iraq.

But it should not be forgotten that Iran tried to delink its disputes with Iraq with the problem of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Washington did not fully realise this pragmatism of Iran and watched with tension Iran's moves during the 1991 Gulf war.

Also, critical of the economic policies after the 1979 "revolution", Rafsanjani has promised an economic boom after 1989 and launched an unprecedented Five-Year Plan. The IMF revealed that Iran's GDP was 10.5 per cent in 1990-91, exceeding its target of 8.5 per cent. The government reduced direct intervention in the economy.

The backbone of the Iranian economy is the Persian Gulf oil. Iran has eased its hawkish oil price policy while aiming to expand its oil production to at least 4.5 million barrels a day by March 1993. Oil production has been opened to foreign participation. This drives Iran to greater accommodation with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf nations. Iran says it understands "new realism" in the world market. An ideological Islamic crusade is becoming a thing of the past due to new thinking and compulsions. Export of "revolution" by coercive means is replaced by the projection of an Irano-Islamic role model by peaceful means.

Ties with Gulf States

Iran has established fairly close relations with Quatar, Bahrain and other Gulf nations. Iran wants Gulf security *without outside presence* and this is the main point of contention with the US. Iran expressed deep concern when the US-Kuwait ten-year defence agreement was signed after the war. But Iran pursued its policy of cooperation with the Gulf states despite all that. Kuwait too promised Iran that neither the British nor American forces would be allowed to use its territory for any attack against Iran. An Iran-Kuwaiti Cooperation Committee has been formed after that promise.

James Baker III had declared in 1991 that "no regional state should be excluded from these security arrangements". This is what Iran wanted. Yet, the Bush security plan, outlined to the Congress in March 1991, did exclude Iran. The Damascus declaration issued by the GCC alongwith Egypt and Syria also excluded from Iran the ethno-linguistic Arab Peace Force. Will Clinton follow this senseless policy?

In a recent ECO Summit (a newly-formed body comprising Turkey, Iran, Pakistan) meeting Rafsanjani said that ECO should play an important role in balancing the economic order and bridging the gap between the North and the South. His visit to Beijing and the actions following that sounds like his larger Third World goal. No surprise, China has found convenient to play its Iran card when Washington decided to supply F-16 to Taiwan.

In short, it is time for the Washington policy-makers to adopt a line of more prudence in dealing with Iran. They should take into account improved relations of Iran with the Gulf states. Secondly, Washington's attitude towards Iran's relations with the Central Asian republics is too simplistic. Any imprudent move to counter the supposed Iranian influence in the region will boomerang. White House should avoid any move that polarises the region.

It is true there are enough hardliners in Iran who are trying to prevent Iran from re-entering the international community at regional and global levels. Washington should not take any step that could strengthen them against the moderates.

Finally, Teheran-Washington ties would determine the status of peace in this large geographical and volatile area of the world. ■

JUST OUT BOOK ON CHILD LABOUR

Children at Work: Problems and Policy Options

Edited By:

Bhagwan Pd. Singh • Shukla Mahanty

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Child labour problem has attracted the attention of different national and international organizations, social scientists, activits groups and governments. As a matter of fact, the problem is a burning one in India which has the highest incidence of child labour in the world.

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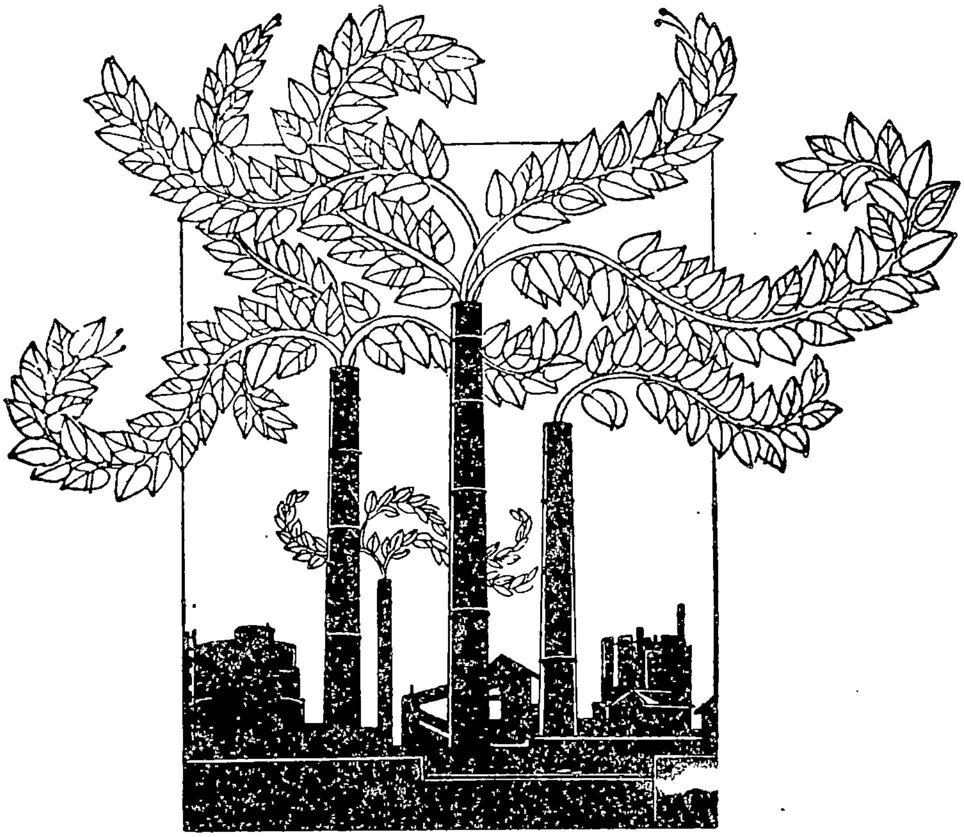
The plant that has grown into many, many trees.



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EDITORIAL

No Short-Cuts

The strong-arm methods used by the police to put down the BJP-sponsored Rashtra Chetana rally in New Delhi on February 25 have evoked sharp criticism from democratic opinion cutting across political affliations. This is fresh evidence, if such testimony is at all needed, of the vibrant pluralism this country can justifiably be proud of.

It is in this context that the injury caused to the BJP President, Dr Murli Manohar Joshi, must be deprecated. However, close scrutiny establishes the fact that he was not hit by the lathi-wielding police but collapsed on account of the water cannon that was employed to disperse the crowd. While decrying all such incidents, including the police assault on women demonstrators, what needs to be noted is that large-scale violence was averted on that day and the Capital of India was thankfully spared a communal carnage, as had been generally feared by the secular forces.

The success on this score was, in a large measure, due to the authorities' vigilance. Even if the police officials' high-handedness in dealing with all sections of the public, including the MPs, not to speak of the rallyists, merit strong denunciation, the Central Government deserves to be complimented for its decisive step that prevented the enactment of a Bombay-type bloodbath near the seat of power. This step has fortified the minorities' sense of security that was substantially eroded in the aftermath of the Babri Masjid demolition at Ayodhya on December 6, 1992, and the subsequent events in Bombay and Surat in particular.

No democrat can condone the police action on that day. But the BJP seems to be protesting too much, describing the Congress Government of Narasimha Rao as "fascist", as has been highlighted in its mouthpiece, *Organiser*. It is intriguing that the *Sangh Parivar* activists have suddenly become votaries of non-violence. Those instrumental in fanning the flames of fratricidal hatred which ultimately resulted in Mahatma Gandhi's assassination are now seeking to appropriate the Gandhian credo to present themselves as martyrs. It is not a just a case of the devil quoting the scriptures—for, who does not know that the *Parivar's* designs are more akin to the objectives of fascists steeped in national chauvinism? The fact remains that the BJP and its associates have been cornered for the first time since December 6, 1992. They have also failed to draw much mileage out of the police excesses on February 25.

However, this should not send out wrong signals. It is quite possible for the members of the Union Government, after the February 25 experience, to lapse into complacency that only through administrative measures can the game of the exponents of *Hindutva* be defeated. Such illusions would be the height of folly. If the police intervention appears to be effective in this particular case, undemocratic executive actions are actually self-defeating in the long run, as has been succinctly conveyed by Justice Rajinder Sachar who heads the PUCL. For such actions could induce the Hindu militants to surreptitiously engage in devious activities devoid of legal sanction. Moreover, such actions could help them enlist sympathy from unexpected quarters as well.

Hence it needs to be reiterated that there are no short-cuts to meeting the challenge *politically* at the *popular level*. Concerted moves in that direction alone are capable of isolating the Hindu communalists and foiling their grand designs of seizing power and installing a *Hindu Rashtra*.

March 3 *S.C.*

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Soft Option but Harsh Reality

ARUN GHOSH

One must start by complimenting the Union Ministry of Finance on the *Economic Survey (1992-93)* presented to Parliament on the eve of the 1993-94 Budget. Two features characterise the *Economic Survey* this year. First, the document gives a wealth of data on different aspects of the economy. Of course, the *Economic Survey* has been progressively giving more and more information over the past few years, but this year the volume of information contained in the *Economic Survey* is quite impressive. Secondly, the Ministry of Finance has, at long last, chosen the path of *transparency* rather than obfuscation and presentation of mythical figures, at least in regard to the country's external debt and balance of payments situation. The *Survey* data were, of course, preceded by comprehensive data on external debt, in a Supplement to the RBI Bulletin for Novemeber 1992. But the *Economic Survey* has done better; it has this year indicated even the figure of outstanding debt in convertible currencies on "military account". So now one can piece together *all* the data on India's external debt.

More significantly, the *Economic Survey* has forecast a deficit on the current account of India's balance of payments of $7 billion in 1992-93, and has stated that "growth of exports may not be sufficient to meet the import needs of the country....Therefore there would be need for some exceptional financing in the medium term." This is an honest admission.

Having said this, one must add that apparently, the *Economic Survey* this year has been written by a number of different experts, and that no great effort has been made to coordinate different bits of the write-up. The attempt at obfuscation, in fact at a highly amateurish justification of the government policies, comes out loud and clear in certain crucial areas.

The entire write-up on 'Social Sectors' (in Chapter 9) is of this category—a wishy-washy justification (and glorification) of Central Government programmes which flies in the face of a large number of reports by independent commissions and committees, for instance, the one headed by Prof A.M. Khusro on the IRDP and similar rural development programmes and on the cooperatives, and by Dr B.D. Sharma in his report on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (presented to Parliament).

And, despite repeated warnings by scholars like Prof B.S. Minhas—that the NSS data on consumption should not be arbitrarly tampered with—the incidence of poverty in 1987-88 is stated to encompass 30 per cent of the population when three reputed experts--Professor Minhas, Jain and Tendulkar--have found, after meticulous sifting of the data State by State, that the incidence of poverty in 1987-88 affected 43 per cent of the Indian population. The focus of the write-up remains on the achievements of the Sixth and Seventh Plans rather than on the true state of the economy.

The author, a distinguished economist, is a former Member of the Planning Commission.

What then is the state of the economy, as of the end of February 1993? This is an important desideratum in working out the policies, programmes and taxation/expenditure levels in the Budget.

First, happily, inflation appears to be generally under control, though several danger signals still remain. The annual rate of inflation—measured by the Wholesale Price Index (WPI)—is down to 6.55 per cent in mid-February 1993. As per the Weekly Statistical Bulletin (dated January 30) issued by the RBI, the increase in M_1 over the year ended January 8, 1993 is only 6.7 per cent. The increase in M_3 is higher by 15.4 per cent (over the same period), but this increase is also considerably less than in 1991-92. The increase in Reserve Money—arising from the government's budgetary deficit—is down to 7.2 per cent. To that extent, the government's effort at compression of the budgetary deficit has apparently been successful.

But the decline in the rate of growth of wholesale prices, it must also be realised, has been due primarily to a bumper crop. Over the year ended January 16, 1993, while the overall WPI increased by 6.8 per cent, the price of pulses declined by two per cent, that of natural fibres by 20 per cent and of oilseeds by nearly 10 per cent. Prices of cereals increased by only one per cent despite hefty increases in the procurement prices of rice and wheat. As a result of the decline in the prices of oilseeds, prices of vegetable oils declined by eight per cent. It is well known that the prices of vegetables, especially of potatoes, have registered a sharp decline, and there has been no increase, possibly a decline, in the prices of common fruits over the year. By and large, one can say that inflationary trends have been kept in check by the bounty of nature. On the other hand, there have been significant increases in the prices of fuel and power, and of manufactured articles; and these rising trends have been reinforced by hikes in administred prices of key inputs like coal, steel, non-ferous metals, *et al.*

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The *Economy Survey* data on employment are not credible. It is well known that, partly as a result of the squeeze on incomes and partly due to the squeeze on credit (and the very high rates of interest charged even by the nationalised banks), there has been widespread closure of small units. The handlooms, in particular, will now get totally wiped out, partly as a result of the Textile (Development and Regulation) Order of December 1992, and partly because of a chronic shortage of yarn for the handlooms. Under the latest policy, no prior approval of the government is required to set up textile units, including powerlooms, except locational clearance in the case of non-SSI units. In other words, the government has, through an administrative fiat (and without the approval of Parliament), virtually killed the handloom industry and encouraged the setting up of powerlooms (which continue to enjoy not only tax concessions but also to misappropriate the concessions granted to the handloom industry). Even earlier, the widely reported deaths of handloom workers as a result of starvation in Andhra Pradesh did not alert the government to ensure that powerlooms do not kill the handlooms. This situation typifies developments in regard to the handloom sector in many parts of the country.

Nor has large scale industrial output shown any resurgence. The latest *Economic Survey* estimates indicate the possibility of an increase in industrial production by some four to 4.5 per cent in 1992-93. However, to anticipate, the latest downturn in the index of share prices in Bombay shows acute nervousness in the market as to the effects of the Budget on domestic industry. Whatever else may or may not have happened to the economy, the growth of industrial output appears to have been stultified despite a good out-turn in regard to agricultural production.

The stagnation of employment and output is a necessary corollary of a policy of "stabilisation" pursued by the government since July 1991. What is really disturbing in this context is the deficit in the balance of payments. In 1991-92, the deficit in the current account of the balance of payments had been brought down to $2.8 billion, or a mere 1.1 per cent of the GDP. As a result of the policy of import liberalisation announced in February 1992, the *Economic Survey* projects a current account deficit of $7 billion in 1992-93. As per the *Economic Survey*, in dollar terms, over April-December 1992 imports into India increased by 16.5 per cent, while exports increased by only 3.4 per cent.

To quote from the *Economic Survey*: "Growth of Indian exports may not be sufficient to meet the import needs of the economy...Therefore, there would be need for some exceptional financing in the medium term." One should underline the last phrase, *"need for...exceptional financing in the medium term"*.

Thus, the *Economic Survey* may be stated to sum up the objective situation in the country as follows: (a) By and large monetary policy, aided by a reduction in the government's overall budgetary deficit, buttressed by a good harvest, has slowed down inflationary pressures. (b) The monetary policies pursued have resulted in a stagnation of industrial output and increased unemployment; and this trend has been accentuated by the sharp cutback in the incomes of most people. (c) While internal stabilisation appears to be possible to achieve in the near future, the reverse is the case in the matter of the balance of payments. (d) Finally, a point not raised earlier, the rapid increase in India's external debt poses a grave danger to the future viability of the Indian economy.

Perhaps it is well to recapitulate India's external debt, as outstanding on, say, September 30, 1992. As per the *Economic Survey*, this debt stood at $71.1 billion. However, this figure excludes the rouble credit, which—under the agreement signed with Boris Yeltsin recently—stands at $10.3 billion *as of end of September 1992*. (The rupee has depreciated since, but there is a queer—unwarranted—clause in the agreement, protecting the dollar value of the credit, now designated in rupees.) There is an additional short-term debt of less than six months which is treated as "trade credits", but which is really short-term bank borrowing by and large rolled over from time to time at the London Interbank Borrowing Rate (LIBOR) *plus* a margin. The RBI Bulletin (Supplement) of November 1992 gives this figure as $2.2 billion. The *Economic Survey* has now indicated an additional debt of $2.2 billion owed in convertible currencies for defence purchases (from GCA countries). The total external debt of India, as of end of September 1992, may thus be put at $85.8 billion, or say anything between $85 and $86 billion.

The RBI Bulletin of November 1992 also gives a schedule of repayment of the principal and interest in respect of past debts (contracted upto September 1992), but this schedule of repayments pertains to an external debt of $66 billion. Adding the export of goods required to meet our rouble credit repayment obligations to the USSR, one gets a debt repayment liability of a little under $10 billion in each of the years 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96 (which is as far as the RBI data currently go). One has to note that the repayment liability of new loans now being contracted is not included in this figure.

At today's exchange rate (of approximately Rs 33 per US dollar), the external debt repayment liability works out to a formidable Rs 33,000 crores per year. Our exports during April-December 1992 were Rs 37,339 crores (or US $13.1 billion), which gives an annual rate of export of less than Rs 50,000 crores or less than $ 17.5 billion.

Contrary to the debt service ratio (of 24.6 per cent in 1991-92) cited in the *Economic Survey*, the debt service ratio to exports in 1993-94 would be an impossible 66 per cent.

The 1993-94 Budget

It is in the background of the state of the Indian economy indicated above, as emerging from official publications (most notably the *Economic Survey* put out by the Union Ministry of Finance just before the Budget) that one has to evaluate and assess the Budget for 1993-94.

To say that the Budget for 1993-94 is a "soft" budget

(Continued on page [illegible])

ECONOMIC SURVEY (1992-93)

Patting One's Own Back

KAMAL NAYAN KABRA

The Economic Survey (1992-93) notes that during the last year, "although the economic crisis of mid-1991 had been contained", "inflation was still running high", "the balance of payments remained under strain, and industrial production was depressed". This is contrasted with the current year's performance to drive home the message that "the policy initiatives introduced after June 1991 have been seen to work. This gives us confidence that the direction of our reforms is right, and that if we persevere with them, we can overcome the severe constraints on our economy and assure a more prosperous future for our people."

What are the main ingredients of this assessment of success of the structural adjustment programme (SAP)? Briefly stated, the Survey notes the following feathers in the cap of the SAP:

a) Compared to 1.2 per cent economic growth *estimated* for 1991-92, it is *expected* that the GDP growth in 1992-93 would exceed four per cent. Last year, the growth rate expected was 2.5 per cent, that is, nearly double the achieved rate.

b) Kharif harvest is expected to show a rise of as much as eight per cent. Agriculture is expected to grow by five per cent. Monsoon gods have been kind.

c) The industrial sector, admittedly suffering from "recessionary conditions through 1992-93", has shown during April-October 1992 a growth of 3.8 per cent. This is treated as a sign of recovery. Significantly, it is noted that, "while quantitative restrictions on imports were not a constraining factor in 1992, *the high cost of imported inputs, reflecting changes in the exchange rate,* probably acted as a *restraining factor* in import-intensive industries". The general index of industrial production was 212.4 at the end of 1991-92. In April 1992, it stood at 208.6 and at the end of October 1992, it was lower at 208.3. The growth figures, therefore, seem to be the result of lower base. The absolute level has still to recover the lost ground but, with full convertibility, imported inputs are again going to be costly, though moderated by lower tariff.

d) There has been decisive progress in *overcoming inflation* and the rate of inflation has declined to seven per cent. As we see below, the reality may not be so balmy.

e) Exports to the hard currency areas have picked up by 11.4 per cent and are better than in the previous year. The foreign currency reserves at the end of January 1993 stood at Rs 13,688 crores. The total export growth in April-December 1992 was 3.4 per cent in dollar terms compared to an absolute decline of 1.5 per cent in 1991-92. However, the trade deficit remains of the order of $ 7 billion.

f) The increase in imports, termed as "a revival to more normal levels" at 16.5 per cent, is expected to amount to a total of around $ 25 billion. The Survey states that the level of $ 25 billion "is somewhat lower than the level in 1990-91". However, the Table on page 2 of the Survey shows the value of imports in 1990-91 at $ 24,082 million only!

g) The decline in inflationary pressures was especially marked in primary articles, including foodgrains. For the latter, the annual inflation rate was at the end of January 1993 negative at three per cent. The deceleration in inflation is claimed as "a major achievement of economic management in the past year". The role of increase in the administered prices of oil products and fertilisers in September 1992 in causing the prevailing inflation rate has been admitted.

h) The total volume of foreign investment approvals at Rs 42.9 billion from August 1991 to December 1992 is "more than three times the Rs 12.7 billion of foreign investment approved in the last decade".

i) There is one area of improvement which the authors of the Survey report in the context where it is due but have chosen not to highlight. This refers to the performance of the Central public enterprises (PEs). Compared to 1990-91, the number of profitable PEs increased during 1991-92 from 124 to 134 and the number of loss-making PEs declined from 109 to 102. Their gross profits increased from Rs 11,102 crores to Rs 13,857 crores with the net profits showing an improvement of Rs 203 crores in one year. This in spite of hostile and denegrating governmental attitude and savage cuts in budgetary support. Recent RBI data show that this achievement of the PEs is not matched by that of the private corporate sector, which has clocked in poorer financial results.

The author, a noted economist, is a Professor in the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi.

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SOME other aspects of the economy are not necessarily considered good by the authors of the Survey. Nevertheless, they are presented either as transitory or inevitable with the hope that the SAP would take care of them in a matter of a few years from now.

The current account BoP deficit is likely to be of the order of US $ 7 billion, that is, about 2.8 per cent of the GDP. This is considered high and needs to be reduced to less than one per cent of the GDP in 1995-96. Since it is also stated that the government intends to move towards full convertibility, import liberalisation, steep cut in customs duties (with some decisive step already taken in the Budget for 1993-94), does one assume that these policies would help us contain the BoP current account deficit to the level of under one per cent of the GDP? It may be noted that current debt servicing obligations at US $ 9 billion have to be met out of fresh borrowings only, since the trade account leaves us with no surpluses for the purpose. The whole exercise hinges on a substantial pick-up in hard currency exports. Here one may see many uncertainties. The more serious one is that imports at high priced forex may queer the pitch for exports with heavy import-intensity. The demand for forex may reach staggering heights owing to duty cuts, bullion imports, gold bonds, baggage rules relaxation, high income and price elasticity of demand for imported goods, increased outflows of payments consequent on enlarged foreign capital, equity and technology inflow and, of course, currency speculation. To treat the existing uncontrolled market prices of forex as representing the likely upper level is too naive to be credible.

A number of claims on leaving the days of crisis management behind us are based on highly suspect foundations. With revenue deficit at over Rs 17,000 crores and fiscal deficit double this level, restoration of fiscal balance may well be seen in cuckoo-cloud land only. With reduced real investment level, planning even in our restricted sense has to remain dormant.

Claims on restraining the inflationary spiral is more a matter of statistical game than of ground reality. The claims are based on provisional November-December 1992 and January 1993 price index. The final price index always turns out to be higher than the provisional figures. Already a number of adminstered prices, statedly soaking purchasing power to the extent of Rs 10,000 crores, have been raised. The range of goods affected (wheat, rice, sugar, coal, steel, railway fares and freights) is such as to have a significant cascading effect. Though these prices have gone up, the terminal index number used in the claims contained in the Survey do not reflect these changes. Thus the extent of the rate of growth of prices is clearly understated. Then, what concerns people is the growth or otherwise of prices; whether they are subject to an inexorable ratchet effect, that is, move in one direction, upwards only, or whether they can come down. Also the relevant prices are the consumer prices. But the universe of discourse is vitiated in the official thinking by concentrating on the rate of growth of the wholesale price index. Incidentally, index numbers are directly comparable without being presented in percentage terms.

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SURPRISINGLY, there are some incidental references to the question of employment. Though the basic approach is: "If an enterprise turns sick or closes down, it is difficult to secure to the workers rights which only healthy enterprises can afford to give." However, it is recognised that "the poor are entirely dependent on their own labour". The inference which is drawn from it robs the proposition of any value for the working masses; it says: "Hence it is important to ensure that *national output* and employment grow as rapidly as possible." But what happens when output increases do not translate themselves into employment increases? For instance, private manufacturing employment, after the great pick-up in growth during the 1980s, was 43.83 lakhs in 1989 against 45.45 lakhs in 1981. Shockingly, employment growth is not even considered worth monitoring by the government; the *latest* figures on employment relate to 1989, that is, well before the present period of the SAP. Is there something worth concealing from the public view? Organised employment's performance since the SAP was launched is sought to be kept a mystery.

Is there something in either the stabilisation policies or the SAP which can be held responsible for over 13 points increase in the index number of the WPI as compared to over 24 points increase last year? The reduction in fiscal deficit could have played some role. However, the growth in money supply is hardly adequate (at around 13 per cent) to reduce the liquidity overhang. Credit allocation to non-food wholesale trade saw a large increase of 11.9 per cent during 1992-93, compared to 4.8 per cent and 3.5 per cent increments in the two earlier years. How large was this increase feeding into inventory growth can be gauged from the negative four per cent change in the credit for public procurement of food. With costly import of food, low level of foodstocks and reduced offtake of the PDS, the observed price behaviour has to be attributed to, first, good monsoon, consecutively for the fourth year in succession, and more disturbingly, to the failure of purchasing power, fashionably termed entitlements, in the hands of a large majority of the rural and urban poor. After all, it has been indicated that the poverty processes have become stronger after 1989. The Survey remains content with uncritical reporting of the poverty ratio (at 29.9 per cent) as on March 1, 1988. How much water has flown in the great seas surrounding us since then seems to be of little concern to those who are fishing for kudos. The poverty-line itself has remained fixed since the mid-1960s, though the GDP and national potential for meeting human needs has grown substantialy over the last three decades. Our policy-makers seem to be firm believers in the iron law of wages, which prescribes a minimum physiological subsistence level, ignoring what the Classicals thoughtfully included as customary and culturally determined minimum needs.

In this connection, it is worth noting how the glib verbiage contrasts with hard facts. At one point the Survey says:

> Apart from the fulfilment of *basic needs*, all citizens must have access to basic social services such as elementary education, primary health care, safe drinking water and sanitation at affordable costs—*services that empower the poor* to better their circumstances.

But then this position is watered down by the following observation:

> But our country is large, and the poor are numerous. The reach of poverty alleviation programmes has been limited.

First you must behave with your reproductive behaviour and then expect to acquire access to basic needs!

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ACTUALLY, at the level of basic approach to social problems, the Survey has adopted an out-and-out, crass individualistic position, which implies that the poor are poor because they are found wanting in "the capacity for self-improvement". This holds good, according to the authors of the Survey, both for human inidividuals as well as for each nation. It philosophises:

> The secret of success lies in the capacity for self-improvement. True self-reliance is to be found in the capacity for self-improvement, for continuous learning, borrowing, adaptation and innovation. It would be an error to think that only industrial countries can improve themselves, or that developing countries must only import improvement. (8.17)

Obviously, in such a mimetic, individualistic and competitive framework, the poor, whether individuals or nations, have to go in for self-improvement by continuous learning, borrowing, adaptation and innovation but their path and destination are pre-determined. It is this mimetic approach, submissive attitude which is the basis for the structural adjustment programme (SAP) which is dominating our economic thinking and policies.

Little wonder then that for the authors of the Survey the crisis of the economy appears to have become a part of the past. Their concern was with maintenance and strengthening of the system. The forex crunch, the depletion of forex reserves, the plumetting of our external credit rating were depriving them of their favourite option: constantly growing borrowings. With more than willing acceptance of all the conditionalities embodied in the SAP and taking these as their very own programme, borrowed funds have started pouring in. The reserves, though somewhat reduced, are at a comfortable level of over Rs 13,000 crores. Now, they can liberalise imports, make the rupee fully convertible on trade account. The capacity for self-improvement, as they visualise, has been restored! The crisis has disappeared!

In this context it is not surprising that the economic event of the year, the scam engulfing our over-expanded financial sector has been dismissed in just one sentence as "the irregularities in securities trading in some banks damaged liquidity and temporarily raised questions of confidence". One cannot come across a worse understatement which misses out the shennanigans on the stock markets, the role of the Finance Ministry and the RBI and billions of rupees of illegal and fraudulent transactions which showed the abuse of all our political and economic institutions. It has been argued elsewhere by the present writer (*Financial Markets Scam: Fruits of Liberalisation*, Sahyog Prakashan, 1992) how the scam is closely linked to the structural adjustment programme and the Budget for the year 1992-93. The Survey surveys the economy selectively and is more interested in sending appropriate signals than in attempting an objective assessment of the year under review. We see examples galore of this general tendency in the present volume as well. ■

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RAILWAY BUDGET

Implementing IMF Guidelines

GEORGE FERNANDES

When the Railway Minister kept warning the country during the last two months that a fare and freight increase was on the cards in the new Railway Budget, one was aware that the International Monetary Fund was having its way with the ordering of Railway finances.

The Fifth Plan budgetary support of 75 per cent to the Railways' plan outlay had gradually been brought down to 42 per cent in the Seventh Plan. Even so, the Eighth Plan, whose draft was finalised after the IMF's structural adjustment package had been adopted by the government, had visualised a budgetary support of 20 per cent to the Railways' plan. This has been reduced to 14.7 per cent for the 1993-94 annual plan from the already very low 16 per cent in 1992-93.

The Railways, therefore, will argue that there is no other option but to raise the money from the people if a breakdown in the services is to be prevented. But there are options which the Railways have chosen to ignore, which is where the IMF must have had its way. The line of thinking must have been that the Railways have to operate like any other business and break even.

What the protagonists of such a line forget is that the Railways, unlike road transport, have to build and maintain the tracks including the bridges that span the rivers.

Why not have the government take responsibility for laying and maintaining the tracks?

In the alternative, why not have the government subsidise the interest on the borrowings for the tracks and bridges which could be constructed with market borrowings?

Then there are the social burdens the Railways carry. Today, the cost of these social burdens would be over Rs 2500 crores. Why should only the Railway users—and most of the them are poor people—pay for carrying fruits and vegetables to the dining tables of the rich, LPG gas to the kitchens of the affluent, and chicken and lamb to five-star hotels?

These are not rhetorical questions with any political content. you just cannot maintain such an unjust order where the rich will forever live off the poor.

The World Bankers and IMF spokespersons should be asked to present a statement of the subsidies given by the German, French, British, Japanese, Swiss and now, perhaps, also the US Government to their Railway systems to take care of the social costs.

Since corruption is now deemed as a national virtue, one may sound stupid if one refers to it as an unsocial burden which costs the Railways at least Rs 2000 crores annually. As the Minister of the Railways, I had organised a national convention to fight against corruption in the Railways with the trade unions of railwaymen—whether recognised or not, railway officials from the Railway Board down to the divisions, vigilance officials and Home Ministry officials including the Director of the CBI and formulated a plan to eliminate corruption in the Railways.

Jaffer Sharief could present a supplementary budget reducing Railway fares and freights if he cared to act on it, unmindful of the hazards of fighting against the nation's establishment which has a vested interest in corruption.

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THE Railway Minister has congratulated himself and the railwaymen, on the so-called success of his "project unigauge" which he has been implementing with so much fanfare. True, there is some mental block in most politicians and their constituents about the metre gauge track and, therefore, there are demands and agitations for gauge conversion in some parts of the country. But wisdom lies in identifying priorities when one has limited resources and far too many claims on them.

The cost of conversion from metre to broad guage is about 75 per cent the cost of laying new tracks. When across the country there are long pending and genuine demands for new lines, any sensible planner would have utilised every rupee he can secure to expand the Railway network. One

(continued on page 30)

The author, a veteran Socialist trade union leader who is now a significant figure in the Janata Dal, was the Union Minister for Railways in the National Front Government (1989-90).

PRIVATISATION

An Economic Device or a Political Strategy?

ASHA GUPTA

Privatisation, a byword in the eighties, has already become the biggest story of the twentieth century. Two political legacies of the 1980s have influenced the economic policies of the 1990s—(1) the renewed enthusiasm for private enterprise and market economy; and (2) the rolling back of the frontiers of the state. The confluence of these two trends has led to great hopes for privatisation in the coming decades. It is difficult to say whether privatisation is good politics or good economics. The normative theories justifying privatisation as a direction for public policy draw their inspirations from *laissez-faire* individualism and free market economy promising greater efficiency, smaller government and wider choice. Some look at it as a political strategy for diverting demands away from the state and reducing the role of the government thereby.

Privatisation is seen as good politics in terms of reducing the tax burden on the individual while maintaining and expanding the quality and quantity of the services and products. It is also viewed as good economics in terms of opening new opportunities for entrepreneural innovations. The political economists, in fact, have been looking at the ways of shrinking the public sector and providing the necessary stimulus to keep their economy on the path of steady and sustained growth in the years to come.

Privatisation can be seen as an economic device to rehabilitate the market forces following an intellectual disillusionment with the Keynesian approach to economic management and failure of socialism as a serious intellectual force. The recent developments in Eastern Europe, the former USSR and the People's Republic of China have provided a fillip to the privatisation debate the world over. Privatisation has been the hallmark of Thatcherism.

It is interesting to note that privatisation was not an outcome of a coherent philosophy even in the United Kingdom. In the early days the objectives of privatisation appeared to be purely financial and managerial. The original impetus for privatisation came from a desire to discipline the nationalised industries by subjecting them to the market forces. Subsequently, it began to acquire more specific objectives—reducing the role of the government in decision-making with regard to commercial enterprises, permitting industries to raise funds from the capital market on commercial terms, reducing the public sector borrowing requirements, promoting wider share ownership, creating enterprise culture, increasing competition and enhancing efficiency.

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In fact, the pace of privatisation in the United Kingdom seems to have been influenced more by the macro-economic rather than the micro-economic goals of promoting competition and efficiency. The importance of the fiscal objective is clear from early prviatisation during 1979-83. The Thatcher Government was able to raise additional revenues through privatisation. For instance, the revenue from the sale of nationalised industries grew from £ 377 million during 1979-80 to £ 5000 million during 1986-87. It also helped in reducing the PSBR since according to the British convention, the asset disposals are treated as negative government spending as far as national accounts are concerned.

However, it was the floating of shares, with a definite purpose of widening the ownership, that gained maximum attention the world over. During 1979-87, the total number of shareholders in Britain increased three times. For instance, in January 1987, the number of shareholders in British Telecom was 800,000, in British Gas 2,400,000 and in TSB 1,600,000. Approximately 3,800,000 Britishers had shares in more than one or two privatised enterprises. The value of these shares increased over the years.

It certainly had the dramatic effect of creating windfall gains for the successful applicants for shares. Therefore, it became highly popular with the millions of successful applicants, while the losses borne by the taxpayers were thinly spread and less visible. The government was also able to reap political benefits by claiming wealth redistribution via underpricing of the shares and pushing back the frontiers of the state. It also helped in reducing the influence of the organised labour.

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THE question arises : would Mrs Thatcher still have adopted the privatisation strategy had it proved to be economically efficient but politically non-viable? If politics is the art of the possible, the possible is that which the politician is able to get across, in terms of what his or her audience is willing to accept, both on rational and emotional grounds. It is this 'knack' for measuring political circumstances correctly that makes the difference between 'honest intentions' and success. Mrs Thatcher had this 'knack' in plenty. She was able to convert the privatisation policy into the political payoffs.

She knew it perfectly well that it was dangerous to assume that people or institutions would act altruistically or in the public interest. Politically, it was impossible to achieve a policy however rational or logical it might appear to an economist, unless and until it served the self-interests of the individuals. In fact, it is 'self-interest' which motivates both the public and the private spheres and 'self-interest' does not necessarily imply 'selfishness'. The Thatcher Government succeeded in making an unapologetic case for the virtues of capitalism, individualism and profit motive. Privatisation stirred many corners of the British economies more effectively than anything else on the political horizon. Deliberate efforts were made by the Thatcher Government to design a programme that was not only achievable but also popular.

It is very surprising that within a short span of forty years, Britain moved from private enterprise to nationalisation and back to privatisation again. Privatisation, as such, has to be seen as an antithesis of nationalisation. The 'ethics' of nationalisation involves three main arguments—(1) the validity of the state as opposed to private property rights, (2) the principle on which property is to be expropriated, and (3) the compensation due to the previous owners. Privatisation also involves the same arguments though in a reversed order—(1) the validity of the private as opposed to state property rights, (2) the principle on which property is to be distributed, and (3) the compensation due to the state. In both the cases, public enterprises have been used as policy instruments.

In fact, the motive of the governments in advanced industrialised nations has been to reap political benefits out of the popular mood prevailing in the societies. Privatisation in the United Kingdom and France provided an opportunity to build up electoral support by popularising the virtues of individual enterprises, private initiative and private motives. It also provided positive incentives in generating additional revenues from the sale of the public assets. But privatisation involves serious political risks in the developing economies.

Privatisation has occurred in developed economies in an entirely different social, cultural and economic millieu than the one prevailing in the developing ones. Undoubtedly, the scope for privatisation in a given society is set by the socio-economic conditions and the political culture prevailing therein It is easier for those countries to reduce the role of the state which have accorded considerable legitimacy to the private sector than those emphasising the redistributive role of the state in the pursuit of social justice.

Shedding costly redistributive programme in the name of privatisation can result in alienation of traditional political support in the developing countries. It certainly involves grave political risks. Also, the basic approach in most cases has been negative. Privatisation is generally seen as unloading of the loss-making enterprises. The narrowness of the middle strata income and thinness of the capital market can also affect the privatisation programme adversely.

In many developing countries, where political instability abounds or the polity is infested with ethnic, religious or regional tensions with the dominance of certain groups, privatisation is likely to pose serious problems. It may not be politically acceptable to allow certain groups to gain economic and political ascendancy at the cost of others. For instance, we find general apprehension of Kikuyu in Kenya and Bamilekee dominance in Cameroon.

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HOWEVER articulate a privatisation policy may be, it cannot be implemented successfully if the other factors are against it. In fact, there is a close association between power, wealth and politics in all societies. These constitute the political culture of a given society. The prospects of privatisation depend upon the political culture, level of economic development, geographical size, bureaucratic capabilities, entrepreneural skills available and cultural traits prevailing in a given society.

The very process of privatisation can lead to a number of political controversies. Once a public sector enterprise's assets are evaluated, a certain level of administrative efficiency is required to assess the bids made by the potential buyers, arrange finance and insurance cover, and deal with the complex legal issues. Very few countries may actually possess the requisite administrative skills and planning capacity. In some cases, the government may be reluctant to transfer certain strategic activities to the private hands. Privatisation may be resisted on ideological grounds in other cases. The judiciary may also refuse to take up extra load in the wake of privatisation.

Like all economic reforms, privatisation too has distributional consequences. It may favour certain groups at the cost of others. As such, governments may be unwilling to sell assets to 'undesirable' domestic or foreign investors. While the lure of certain benefits may bring forward certain domestic or foreign investors, the distortionary concessions may create new sources of economic disparities and inefficiencies and set a 'dangerous' precedent for future privatisations. As such, privatisation can be both the cure and the cause of economic ills.

Further, the implementation of complex socio-economic reforms requires great 'political expertise' and 'administrative skills' in abundance. Instead of reducing the role of the government, the privatisation drive may actually enhance it. Privatisation can only relieve the government of the 'doing part' of the job only. The concieving, planning, goal-setting, standard-setting, performance-monitoring and evaluating part still remains with the government. If these are done badly, the public interests still suffer. As such, privatisation can never be a cure of governmental incompetence.

An incompetent government cannot lead to economic efficiency, even if it decides to privatise an enterprise. The government is still involved in a range of activities. It is the government which decides whether to privatise or not. In case it decides to privatise, only the government can identify the enterprises to be privatised. Again, it is the government which decides the modalities of privatisation and the time framework. Only the government can decide whether to provide tax incentives or not. In the case of retrenchment, no government can ever escape the moral duty of providing the 'safety network' to the affected employees. In the case of disinvestment, it is the government which fixes the price of a share. It is likely to meet severe criticism if the shares are 'over-priced' or 'under-priced'. Run by human beings, the government can also commit blunders.

Even after privatisation, the role of the government is not really reduced. Only the nature of the job changes. Instead of running an enterprise itself, the government is now required to regulate it. It cannot avoid monitoring the performance of the privatised enterprises in the public interest. In order to supervise the privatised enterprise, it needs extra staff and requisite skills. It may find it very difficult to guarantee the quality of service rendered by the privatised enterprise, without being able to control it directly anymore. Nor can it remain fully informed while maintaining an arms-length relationship. In fact, the government's role is irreducible despite privatisation. It has to regulate the privatised enterprises and operate those that cannot be privatised owing to legal, political, economic, social or cultural impediments.

If privatisation is seen merely as a matter of growth, productivity, efficiency, foreign exchange earnings which derive from economic and political compulsions, to the neglect of the social and cultural context, it may very well fail. The benefits of economic development need to be studied in the context of national culture. In the contemporary world, the relevance of socio-economic setting to the mode of political thought and action is overwhelming. The accelerating technological urbanisation and affluence have a definite bearing on the political structure. Nor can an organisation be studied in economic terms in isolation from the socio-cultural context.

Generally speaking, any failure on the economic front is castigated in the simple terms—lack of political will. But it is one thing to have the 'lack of political will' and quite another to have failed owing to 'unfavourable conditions'. What is often seen as 'lack of political will' or 'failure of political will' may, in fact, be the wisest course of action in the given circumstances. Sometimes ambiguity can pay rich political dividends. And the Narsimha Rao Government seems to be indulging in the same exercise. ■

Towards a Common Civil Code

G.S. BHARGAVA

Some advocates of a common civil code claim that the failure of successive governments to implement the directive principle (of the Constitution) is a glaring instance of "appeasement" of Muslims. It is a half-truth. While conservative Muslim leaders have opposed it, their Hindu couinterparts are no more for it. The vested interest cuts across religion. A look at the chequered history of efforts to evolve a common civil code, spanning over fifty years, confirms it.

Paradoxically enough, the Hindu and Muslim opponents of social reform have been more successful after independence than before. They let the British Government change the personal laws of people of both faiths not because the reform was pale-faced but because they did not have the stomach to confront the foreign rulers. After independence, on the other hand, they have been taking advantage of the democratic rights guaranteed by the Constitution to thwart progress.

Thus, the ancestors of the so-called *sadhus* who are now active in our public life and their kinsmen could not prevent the Sati Regulation Act of 1829 and the Hindu Widow's Remarriage Act of 1986, among others, being put on the statute book. So they turned their wrath on the Hindu social reformers who not only paved the path for the changes but also facilitated and promoted their enforcement.

The same was the case with the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act of 1939, even if the *ulema's* reasons for sponsoring it were questionable. Although Koran permits dissolution of marriage by women in case of necessity, under the Hanifi law obtaining in India a Muslim woman seeking divorce would lose her faith. This was leading to conversion of women bent on getting out of unwanted alliances. To put an end to it, the *ulema* proposed enactment of a law empowering Muslim judges to dissolve Muslim marriages in specified circumstances.

But the British Government would not agree that only Muslim judges should dispose of Muslim divorce cases. The Muslim League too would not go along with the *ulema*. So they had to agree to judicial dissolution of marriages in particular cases.

The experience falsifies the claim that the Muslim personal law, being of divine orgin, is not subject to secular courts. The *ulema* themselves sought the legislation. Secondly, when the government stod firm on the issue of Muslim judges the vested interests climbed down.

The Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Act, enacted two years earlier in 1937, was also the outcome of the *ulema* seeking government intervention to oust the operation of customary laws in force, especially in undivided Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province and to bring all Muslims under a common *Shariat* umbrella. Under the customary laws in operation in these provinces the Muslim landlords were taking advantage of the then prevailing Hindu law to bequeath their entire property on their male heirs denying the daughters their share under the Islamic law. But the government insisted on keeping agricultural property out of the purview of the law on the ground that it was a provincial (State) subject, while the Muslim League introduced a provision for optional application of the new law. Thus in matters of adoption, wills and legacy, Muslims could choose between the customary laws and the *Shariat* provisions.

It is significant that after independence the Indian Union Muslim League has been against a similar provision for Muslims to choose between a general law like the Special Marriages Act or even the Code of Criminal Procedure and the *Shariat* law. But for Nehru's firm stand, the Muslim orthodoxy would have got away with diluting the Special Marriages Act to restrict its application to non-Muslims.

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WHILE the orthodox Muslim resistance to social reform was open and unabashed, the role of their Hindu opposite numbers in resisting changes in the personal law was no less formidable. If the advanced

Hindu Community accounting for 80 per cent of the population had set the style in the matter keeping religion out of social reform the ground could have been created for a common civil code.

Initiative for changes in Hindu succession and marriage laws originated from enlightened Hindu legislators in the British period itself. If the Congress had lent its moral and political weight to them they would have been brought into force perhaps before independence itself. But the Congress was too deeply involved in the freedom struggle to find time for it. Or, the Congress leaders might have thought that their involvement would needlessly politicise the issue and put the back up of the British Government.

The framework for comprehensive reform and codification of Hindu laws governing succession, inheritance, marriage, divorce, minority, guardianship and adoption was prepared by two expert committees headed by B.N. Rau. A Bill based on their proposals was taken up by the provisional Parliament in 1948 with Dr B.R. Ambedkar piloting it.

Nehru's commitment to the reform was transparent and total but he was also aware of opposition to it among some of his own colleagues. So instead of going in for comprehensive legislation he agreed to a step-by-step approach by splitting it into three sections. Still the resistance persisted. Some of the Congress veterans, shy of showing their hand, put up a Muslim member, Naziruddin Ahmed, to stage a filibuster and stall consideration of the legislation. An ace parlimentarian, Ahmed moved hundreds of amendments, very often for improvements in punctuation and syntax. According to G.R. Rajagopal, a former Secretary of the Law Ministry who has written extensively on the subject, only three preliminary clauses of the Bill could be passed in seven days! The ploy worked and the legislation was shelved.

The mood of the ruling Congress party in the first Lok Sabha was different not because of fulfilment of Nehru's hope that adult franchise would change the social composition of MPs. The bulk of the members was landed interests but whatever be their personal predilections they stood by Nehru's resistance to orthodoxy and social conservatism. Although there was no Opposition worth the name, the party spirit also was engendered in them.

The first Bill to be enacted was the Hindu Marriage and Divorce Bill—far from controversial because it only sought to put Hindu women on a par with their Muslim sisters in respect of the right to judicial dissolution of marriage. Lower caste women in most parts of the country had that option under the customary law. So it helped only the upper caste spouses. But it took three to four decades for the stigma of divorce to be overcome among the higher castes in the rural areas, if at all.

With the Special Marriages Act having already been passed, the draft provision in the Hindu Marriages Act for civil marriages was dropped. This also pleased the conformists because all marriages among Hindus had to be *dharmik*. Meanwhile, the draft bill on intestate succession among Hindus was published. Like the first one on marriage and divorce, it was also referred to a joint select committee which elicited public opinion on a representative scale. In fact, the entire legislation was thoroughly vetted by the concerned people before enactment.

The third was the Hindu Succession Bill, which could have been a model for a uniform civil code if the conservatives had not had their way in vital respects. Thus, the Mitakshara joint family was left out of its applicability with the result that nearly 80 per cent of Hindus are not affected. While the male heirs inherit ancestral property by birth, the daughters do not. Their right to live in an ancestral "dwelling house" after marriage is also not recognised. Only unmarried and widowed daughters have the right.

Nor can the daughters claim partition of the dwelling house. In other words, their claims to ancestral property are based more on compassionate grounds (that an unmarried or widowed woman should not be left destitute and homeless) than on social or economic justice. There will, however, be equal sharing by sons and daughters of other types of property.

The Telugu Desam Government in Andhra Pradesh has changed the law in respect of ancestral agricultural property putting the daughter on a par with the son, or making her a coparcenor. It is not known how the change is working, especially since the agricultural property was already disposed of to beat the land ceiling laws. Many legal experts think the Andhra Pradesh law is unworkable.

In States like Kerala where the matriarchal system prevails under the Marumakkattayam and Aliuyansantana laws the daughter is entitled to inherit joint family property including a dwelling house. The third section, the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Bill, was the least controversial and easily passed muster. It ensures a mother's right to adopt a child as well as for consenting to her husband adopting a child. Also a girl can be adopted.

In other words, even in the relatively more enlightened Hindu community with a record of more than a hundred years of consistent social reform the higher caste vested interests do not countenance change. For instance, will the abolition of the concept of the Hindu undivided family under a uniform civil code be acceptable to those who claim tax benefits under the rubric?

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AGAINST this background, a common civil code has to be seen and promoted as social reform for the amelioration of women of all communities and not as a means of integrating them at the perceived cost of their identity. By needlessly politicising it, the BJP and its supporters have made it more difficult of realisation. As Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, a doughty champion of women's uplift, once asked: how would a uniform civil code be conducive to national unity when uniform laws for crimes, contracts, torts and constitutional rights could not promote it all these years? So the argument that the absence of such a code is responsible for the distrust and worse of the minorities among militant Hindus is nothing but rationalisation of an ugly phenomenon.

Justice M.C. Chagla, whom the BJP used to acclaim once, interpreted Article 44 of the Constitution (on a common civil code) not as requiring legislation of an all-embracing character. "The State may decide to bring about social reform by stages and the stages may be territorial or they may be community-wise," he said, because "one community might be prepared to accept and work social reform, another may not yet be prepared for it."

Further, besides Muslims, the Scheduled Tribes also have reservations about some aspects of a uniform civil code. When the Indian Adoption Bill was sought to be enacted as a uniform law the representatives of the Scheduled Tribes pointed out "practical difficulties" in the way of accepting it because it could be a source of intrusion into their lives and might also lead to property going outside the tribes. In the context of the uneven social development of different sections of our people, such apprehensions are natural and need to be tided over tactfully.

In sum, it is better not to think in terms of national level social reform covering different aspects of community living. Laws like the Andhra Pradesh legislation on women's property rights and those obtaining in Kerala can be adopted by other States. The Kerala inheritance laws are followed by Christians and Muslims unless the latter opt for the Islamic code under the Shariat Act. Similarly, Hindus in Goa follow the Portuguese code in operation there in many matters. It has several wholesome features.

At the national level, social reform can be promoted by legislation which will not be seen as impinging on personal laws. The Special Marriages Act and the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act are instances in point. Many of their provisions would be seen as violative of religious principles of different communities but they have been accepted because they are problem specific. Polygamy can also be tackled in a similar way so that even if it remains theoretically valid for Muslim men it will practically disappear. Where it is not possible, decentralisation of the power to bring about social changes to the States and if necessary to the lower organs of administration like the district councils will be a way out.

Above all, an eclective approach in the matter is necessary. The architects of the Hindu Code are path-finders in this respect. They had the genius and catholicity to borrow from common law in respect of marriages, and the Muslim law in the matter of a woman's right to divorce and a share in ancestral property. In the process, they fostered a spirit of mutual tolerance and willingness to give and take from other faiths and systems. Such an approach is more necessary today when even eminent politicians preach and practise sectarian hatred. ■

A New Shade of the Hindu

Minorities are Falling Prey to the Changing Moods of the Majority Community

ANIL KANUNGO

The rise of Hindu nationalism reached its crescendo on December 6, 1992 at Ayodhya. This possibly symbolises the first phase of culmination of Hindu militancy in the country. Many regard this incident as being extremely unfortunate for the growth of a secular state, while a few others draw its analogy to the dismemberment of partition. However, the country has unleashed enormous amount of communal violence since then. Communalism is on the rise without showing any signs of abetting.

Today, the polarisation between the Hindus and the Muslims is quite sharp and glaring. The present Hindus are an aggressive lot whereas the Muslims seem to be living in a state of fear. The average Muslim is certainly unaware of the transformation within the HIndu community today. Muslims do not treat the Hindus anymore as docile, servile, sympathetic and unconcerned as they were in the pre-independence period.

During the national movement the Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi was able to mobilise the large body of Hindus who made a significant contribution towards the attainment of independence. Many of them gave up their homes and families to join the *satyagraha* movement. Thousands were hanged to death. But all stood up bravely to the assaults of the British. With the partition all of them forgot the sacrifices that they had made to achieve independence. The Hindus emerged as a new people. In the post-independence period their access to power have transformed them still further. Even the socially advanced sections of the Muslim community have not been able to fathom the total nature of the transformation the Hindu community has undergone.

Today the Hindus are a militant, demanding lot. They are certainly in the forefront of economic progress and social advancement. They stand on a sounder footing in society as compared to the minorities. They have remained identified with the power structure throughout independent India and that has helped them to exert influence over other communities. They want to dominate those who oppose them. The purpose behind them is to garner the support of the electorate and to bring them to their fold. The Ayodhya crisis bears testimony to their main motive.

The reactions in the wake of the Ayodhya crisis have been many and varied. Of course, there have been some lamentations on traditional lines. One of the first reactions was of bewilderment and sorrow. At the same time there was a feeling of triumph noticed among a few sections of the society.

Keeping all these perceptions in view, it will be interesting to know how far Gandhi has been relevant for us. It seems that of late very few Hindus believe in Gandhi. But many pay lip service to his thoughts. Some still feel Gandhi is relevant for India. But do the politicians, administrators and religious fanatics feel the same?

It is true that Gandhi lives on in the subconsciousness of our mind and will appear and reappear. But how many of us are going to be his followers is difficult to gauge. His concept of *bhaichara* has possibly lost its meaning in the present day as both the communities—Hindus and Muslims—do not live together in a state of peace and amity. Hatred, malice, sense of fear and suspicion—all combined together threaten to weaken further the body politic and the very fabric of our society.

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THE demolition of the Babri Masjid has brought about a fundamental change in the national scene. Muslims are too frightened at seeing the changing attitudes of the majority community. The present disturbance possibly threatens their very existence. There is a growing sense of insecurity among them. The average Muslim lives today in a state of mortal fear.

This is the present trend in Indian politics and is reflected in the administration as well. The person who gets battered considerably in the process is the lower class Muslim. He still continues to live in a ghetto of his own, misguided by his leaders and

In the best of families...

They happen to the best of journals—typographical mistakes, I mean. The newsletter of the India International Centre had a report of a talk on the architecture of Joseph Allen Stein. And there was this sentence: "Most identifiable with Stein's work is...the integration of man-made construction with sits and landscape." A case of site denied!

The same issue had a notice of the award-winning little film "Totanama". "In the film," said the review, "a trader goes on his travels leaving his wife Khojastha behind in the case of the story-teller parrot who prevents her from being reduced by Prince Mehtab who has attracted her, by diverting her attention each night with a tale." Seduction certainly is a kind of reduction.

I wrote a tribute to Mallikarjun Mansur a few weeks ago and I was somewhat shaken to find that I had been shown as saying that "the torment has gone back into the magic mountain from where it used to flow." I had meant—and written—"torrent". And I blamed, as usual, the printing room for this mistake. I discovered later that the newspaper was not to blame. The mistake had occurred while my hand-written article was typed and it went to the editor without being detected—and he had taken me at my word!

H.Y.S.

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remains ignorant of the changes taking place all around him. On the other hand, he has an unflinching faith in his leaders who certainly bank on his credulity and ignorance. His faith in the Constitution is waning but he still believes secularism is the way of life for the country. At times he hopes he can seek help from the neighbourhood. The more he thinks in those terms the greater enmity he will arouse in India. The Muslim today has been duped by his leaders and leads his life in misery. Seeing the pitiable conditions of their folks the Muslim leaders have not changed themselves. Confrontation seems to be their virtue. The damage caused to the minorities by such leaders is definitely hard to assess.

Today vast segments of the Muslim population remain a poor, uneducated and helpless lot. There is not much initiative taken to help them out of this morass. No jobs, no loans, no basic infrastructure. There is no change in personal law. Whatever changes have been made in the Islamic countries is difficult to implement here. The Shah Bano case is an example of what fundamentalism can do to wreck a community. If Muslims face injustice because of their religion then there is every reason to protest and fight for a social change in right earnest.

Today the Indian Muslim community needs a leader of immense credibility, foresight and great persuasive power to lead his followers from a dismal past to a better future. He should be able to provide them education and justice and bring about a social change in them. But it remains doubtful if the fundamentalists will allow such a person to emerge. So rigid is their system that the moment he wants to move away from it he is either threatened or socially boycotted.

Today's Hindu is in a dominating mood. What he will be tomorrow is difficult to predict. He will certainly not be the Hindu of the British Raj. He may be more dominant by nature, less interested in secularism and a lot more disciplined in his own politics. Till date, he is so much disciplined and well-versed in modern artistry that he may reject the leaders of merit for some time to come. What horrifies the Muslim community most in India is the integration of religion with politics by Hindus. As they remain a minority community they succumb to the changing moods of the majority community. Muslims must be made to come out of the ghetto complex and live without fear. Their life and property must be protected. On the other hand, the Muslims in turn must be realistic and help the emergence of a truly secular society in India.

However, it is urgent to revive the Nehruvian idea of peaceful coexistence. It is definitely an old-fashioned view which is, nonetheless, much more relevant in the present context. One has always thought the Muslim and the Hindu to be complementary to each other. Together they can build a superb nation. But where is the political leadership that will bind them? Yet come what may in the long run democracy, secularism, social justice and human understanding will play a pivotal role in bringing them closer to each other.

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March 8 happens to be the International Women's Day. Lately a lot of publicity is being given to the problems of the girl child even if these have yet to acquire sufficient global importance within the framework of women's development. To mark the International Women's Day, we are presenting some articles on the subject with the aim of focussing attention on the question of the plight of the girl child in India. It is worthwhile to note that India played a key role in getting 1990 observed as the SAARC Year of the Girl Child (a decision taken at the SAARC Summit at Islamabad in 1988) and the decade 1991-2000 declared as the SAARC Decade of the Girl Child (as decided by the SAARC Summit at Male in 1990); though precious little has as yet been done in practical terms towards upliftment of the girl child in this country. —Editor

The Girl Child in India—An Overview

VINEETA SHANKER

In most countries today, and particularly in poor, developing and tradition-bound countries such as India, gender issues are strong and pervasive and discrimination against women begins early. The story of the girl child begins on a wrong note—from being an unwanted child, she goes through a childhood of neglect, deprivation and exploitation which stay with her in all her adult years. The results of this persistent inequality are clearly visible in the current social and economic conditions of women in the country.

It is not that India has not taken cognisance of this deeply entrenched cultural and economic malaise, or that it has not made any attempts to bring about changes. Indeed, it has been party to a number of global and regional initiatives to restore the rightful equality of status to the girl child. It has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989. The priority of the Convention is equality and non-discrimination among children. It is also a signatory to the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children as well as the Plan of Action for Implementing the Declaration (which emerged from the World Summit for Children in New York in 1990).

"Efforts for the enhancement of women's status and their role in development must begin with the girl child. Equal opportunity should be provided for the girl child to benefit from the health, nutrition, education and other basic services to enable her to grow to her full potential." Thus runs the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s.

In pursuit of these goals India, together with six other SAARC nations, declared 1991-2000 AD as the Decade of the Girl Child. It presented its National Plan of Action (NPA) for implementing the World Summit goals (which were also accepted by the SAARC forum as regional goals), at the Second SAARC Conference on Children, held in Colombo in September 1992. Although the NPA takes cognisance of the fact that the 'situation of girls and boys differs significantly according to most indicators'; includes the objective of reduction in disparities by an emphasis on girls' education; and underlines the need for 'special programmes and interventions' directed at ensuring an equal status and a better quality of life to the girl child, it nevertheless treats the girl child as part of the broader target group—the children.

Survival Prospects of the Girl Child

About 12 million girls are born every year, giving India one of the world's youngest female populations. Yet, a million-and-a-half do not live to see their first birthday; within five years another 850,000 die prematurely; by their fifteenth birthday; only nine million survive.

To take care of the gender-specific needs of the girl child, the Government of India formulated a National Plan of Action for the SAARC Decade of the Girl Child. Although gender-specific goals and interventions concerning the survival and protection of the girl child as well as her overall development are based on the goals of the general NPA, they deal with specific requirements of the girl child in areas of health, nutrition, immunisation and maternity as well as those related to the broader objective of overcoming the socio-cultural prejudices which make her less equal than her male counterpart.

Sex Ratio—1901-91
(female per 1000 males)

Year	Sex Ratio
1901	972
1921	995
1941	945
1961	941
1981	933
1991	929

(*Source*: UNICEF, SAARC)

In 1984 40,000 female foetuses were aborted in the city of Bombay alone; of these 16,000 were aborted in one clinic; in a particular hospital one out of 8000 abortions was performed to terminate a male foetus.

At the same time the NPA for girls makes notable additions to the general goals, reflecting the much needed sensitivity to the urgent need of overcoming entrenched gender biases. One of these is the goal of eliminating female foeticide and infanticide, quite ambitiously, by the year 1995. The other area where laudable emphasis has been laid is education, particularly on diversified secondary education which stresses the development of vocational and marketable skills, a scientific temper and a positive self-image.

As in the case of the general NPA, the ambit of the NPA for the girl child is extensive and all-encompassing and, therefore, appears over-ambitious and unrealistic. Although the NPA does identify the areas where policy support would be required for its effective implementation, it does not outline any long- or short-term strategies to achieve its goals. At the same time while it recognises the need for priority resource allocation to women and child development sectors and calls for the mobilisation of private and external funds, it makes no attempt to quantify the material and financial outlays that would be needed for the attainment of these goals. Unless this is done and backed by the required budgetary allocations, India would remain far from even initiating a sustainable effort to restore to the girl child and, through her, to the Indian women, her rightful equal status in society. ■

Education and the Girl Child

MAYA CHAUDHRY

It is mainly in the area of education that the unequal status of and discrimination against the girl child becomes immediately visible. At the same time education is one of the most important areas of intervention for improving the lot of the girl child. Not only is the education of girls essential to attain the goal of universal primary education, it also has a far-reaching impact on other aspects of social and economic development.

Girls' education directly affects the economic well-being of a country leading to a better labour force participation, greater self-employment, participation in the informal market and better home production—all of which contribute towards a higher GNP (gross national product).

At the same time, it has now been quite well established that girls', education has a beneficial impact on infant and child mortality, immunisation and life expectancy. It leads to lower fertility rates and lower population growth as educated women tend to marry later, are more likely to practice family planning and have less children than uneducated mothers. Education also has a positive impact on the health and nutrition levels of not only the expecting mother and her child but also of the entire family. In the longer run, it increases the momentum of girls' education as educated mothers are likely to give greater importance to the education of their daughters. Finally, it is the most important means of changing the status of women towards a more equal footing.

One of the important indicators of progress in the spread of education is the enrolment ratio. In terms of enrolment in primary schools, India has made appreciable strides since independance. The total number of children enrolled in primary schools has risen from 19 million in 1950-51 to 99 million in 1990-91, covering 101 per cent of the relevant population of 6-11 years (Classes I-V). Although there has been a marked increase in the percentage of girls enrolled, from 24.6 per cent (1950-51) to 86 per cent (1990-91), gender disparities continue with 115 per cent of the population of boys registered against 86 per cent of the total number of girls of primary school age.

Education Profile (Classes I-V)

	Total	Boys	Girls
Enrolment Rates (1990-91)	101.0	115.3	86.0
Drop Out Rates (1987-88)	46.97	43.28	49.42

Even so, the gross enrolment ratio does not fully reflect the extent of neglect of girls in education. For, the high enrolment rates are often the result of special enrolment drives and campaigns and give no idea about the sustainability of the initial effort. Far more telling are completion and drop-out rates. Here, not only is the proportion of children completing primary (Classes I-V) and upper primary (Classes VI-VII) school much lower, 53 per cent and 38 per cent respectively in 1987-88, but the disparity was much larger between boys and girls. Only half the girls enrolled at the primary level and one third those enrolled in the upper primary classes go on to complete their schooling. The comparative level for boys is 57 per cent and 42 per cent.

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A large number of factors contribute towards this high drop-out rates for girls. Most importantly, in a situation of poverty and traditional values, education of girls is not seen to contribute to the immediate betterment of living conditions of the family; indeed it may well be seen to increase the burden of housekeeping and care of siblings on the mother who can otherwise go out for work. Neither is education perceived as a means towards future improvement, specially as daughters are seen as belonging to another family and, due to social and economic pressures, to be married off as early as possible.

The paucity of facilities and the poor quality of education imparted does little to alter these attitudes. That the physical infrastructure is grossly inadequate is obvious from the fact that while the student population has increased by 480 per cent since independence, the number of primary schools has risen by less than half (220 per cent). As many as 44 per cent of the schools have no pucca buildings, while 66 per cent have two rooms or less for all the five primary classes. Students are thus crammed into these classrooms with often one single teacher handling two or more grades simultaneously. In a society where gender segregation begins early, the lack of space and facilities tends to act as an added deterrent to girls' attendance. Given the traditional preference for boys, the scarce facilities are also likely to be utilised more by the boys.

One of the factors which inhibits the sending of girls to school is that the girl child performs a large number of household chores—she cooks, washes, collects fuel, fetches water, takes care of siblings and tends domestic animals—all of which leave her little time for school. The absence of a curriculum directly relevant for the improvement of her living conditions further reduces the incentive for schooling.

All these point to the need not only for an expansion of physical facilities but a flexible and sensitive approach which takes care of the special circumstances of the girl child. Flexible schools hours—such as night school, a school closer to home, a larger number of women teachers, community support of teachers, a more relevant curriculum are factors which, if taken into account in formulating the content of priority schemes for the education of girls, are likely to yield a more positive response.

Finally, the status of women is ultimately a matter of attitudes and the pivotal role of the teacher in influencing not only the self-image of the girl child but also the perception of the boy child cannot be over emphasised. ■

Age at Marriage of Girls in India

ANITA KOHLI

In the light of the articulate concern for the existing status of the rights of the child and the girl child in particular, research on and analysis of nuptiality in terms of age at marriage has assumed greater importance in the field of demography. Increase in age at marriage is being increasingly seen as an instrument for emancipation of women. Demographers consider it a policy intervention "beyond family planning" to reduce fertility and consequently population growth. It is important to study marital status distribution, especially of females, and female age at marriage since these affect fertility levels in society. Age at marriage positively influences the health, education, economic and social status of the girl child.

Historical Perspective

Nuptiality in India has two features—universality and early marriage. Marriage is perceived as a religious and community obligation and not so much as a means to achieve personal happiness.

Over the ages religious, social and psychological attitudes and tendencies conspired to make infant marriage a rule and an obligation.

Other factors affecting societal acceptance of pre-puberty marriages were (1) the feeling that women have to be perpetually dependent on someone at all stages of life, (2) the social ideal of monogamy, and (3) the very high child and adult mortality rate then prevalent in India. Adults ensured the survival of some of their offsprings by marrying early and producing as many children as possible. The low expectation of life placed the additional social pressure on parents to complete within their life-span their religious obligation (*dharma*) by arranging the marriage of their children. This all-pervasive practice influenced even the Muslim population in India.

In the mid-nineteenth century reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy fought against this practice which resulted in the Indian Penal Code of 1860 declaring consummation when the wife was below ten years as rape and prescribed punishment extending to transportation for life. This did not have much of an impact and remained of academic interest upto 1929 when the Sarda Act was passed.

The result of these efforts led to an important cultural dimension of these marriages—the two-stage marriage process or the distinction between the marriage and the actual consummation. The consummation or *gauna* became subject to legal constraints in the middle of the nineteenth century. While the age at marriage has risen from 14.7 in 1941 to 17.1 in 1971, the age at cohabitation has changed much less. The decreasing gap implies a decline in the number of marriages following the two-stage process.

Age at marriage in India has increased in recent years. For males the increase started in the fifties and for females in the forties but the increase was only three years for males and 5.4 years for females. The basic legislation regarding minimum age enacted in 1929, the Child Marriage Restraint Act, and its Amendment in 1978 fixing the minimum ages of marriage for boys and girls at 21 and 18 years respectively, had no palpable effect on age at marriage of females though it has influenced the male age at marriage.

Mean Age At Marriage

Year	Female	Male
1901	13.1	20.0
1921	13.7	20.7
1941	14.7	19.9
1961	15.5	21.3
1981	18.3	23.3

The mean age at marriage figures obscure the fact that several girls are married at a very young age. For instance, in some districts of Rajasthan, 45 per cent of 10-14 year old girls are married. Rajasthan, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh account for about 50 per cent of the girls who are married before the age of 16 years.

The relationship of marriage to sexual exposure and the differences in reproductive behaviour of those who marry at different ages, are the two issues that have prompted demographers to study the patterns and trends in age at marriage and fertility. Women who marry young are exposed to conceptions throughout the most fecund years of their lives, are exposed to comparatively longer duration and tend to shorten the inter-generational years, thus resulting in higher fertility. In developing countries like India where customs render marriage almost universal, low age at marriage and low levels of contraception and fertility differentials are most intricately linked with age at marriage. A study in three districts of Rajasthan reveals that there is an inverse relationship between age at marriage and the number of children ever born (CEB). For example, the average number of CEB for women aged 30-38 was 4.5 for those married in

Young girls and women bearing children are at obstretic risk; their skeletal and reproductive systems are immature; in addition to nutrient demands for repair and maintenance of their own tissues and for foetal growth, they have a competing demand for their own further growth and development. As a result, the incidence of low birth weight and pre-natal complications is high and common among teenage mothers. Moreover, the sudden upswing of female deaths in the age group of 15-19 years bears testimony to the high mortality rate among teenage mothers.

the 17-18 age group, and 3.4 for those married in the 19-20 age group. Likewise for women aged 35-39 the CEB was 5.9 for those married in the age group 17-18 and 3.8 for those married in the 19-20 age group. The study suggests that 19 is probably the critical age at marriage for females which could positively influence fertility decline.

The delay in marriage usually produces three effects: (a) it postpones age at first birth (motherhood); (b) it abridges the child bearing period (interval between first and last birth); and (c) it diminishes total fertility (children ever born).

Social and economic factors influence the age at marriage which in turns affects fertility. Additionally, socio-economic factors by themselves also directly influence fertility.

Later marriages imply a shorter reproductive life, a longer interval between generations and a reduction in rates of population growth. Simultaneously postponement of marriage by women to 19-21 would mean a longer stay in school, acquisition of skills for income generation jobs, and greater emotional and physical maturity in meeting the challenge of family life. Early marriage, on the other hand, virtually nullifies opportunities for achieving all the above.

Health Implications

Enough evidence exists to show the adverse effects of low age at marriage of females on health and survival of both the mother and the child. The nutritional and health care deprivations of the girl child increases her vulnerability to the risks of child bearing which also creates risks for the child. "An analysis of data on height and weight of adolescent girls in Kerala revealed that 49 to 67 per cent would have been at risk during pregnancy in the age group 15-19 years; and that this figure dropped to 19 to 23 per cent by the 19th year." (Rami Chabbra and Monica Sharma, 1987)

Early marriage and child-bearing before attaining full growth results in obstructed labour and other complications which endanger the health and survival of the mother as well as the child. In a 15-year old girl who is pregnant there are two competing nutrient demands: the demand for repair and maintenance of her own tissues plus the demand for foetal growth and development, and the nutrient demand for her own further growth. This is the cause of high incidence of low birth weight babies among girls married below the age of 18 years: almost one-third of all the babies born in India.

Between 14 and 18 years, there is a significant degree of catch-up growth of poor rural girls bringing them on a par with those of the affluent girls. Thus the growth process continues for a longer time in the poorer group than in the well-to-do. For this reason, it is even more important that conception be delayed till about the 18th year in the case of poor rural girls than in the case of the affluent. In reality, however, it is the poor rural girls that are married off at a much younger age and have to start their reproductive life much earlier than the well-to-do.

> ICMR (1955) and NNMB (1975) data show that for rural girls there is no evidence of secular trends indicating improved growth performance in the succeeding generation—a feature expected of all successful developing societies.

Early marriage also results in a much higher maternal and infant mortality rate. In the rural areas of India the IMR was much higher for girls married below 18. A similar trend was observed in urban areas where the IMR declined and the age at marriage increased. Further evidence of this fact derives from the State of Kerala where the IMR was the lowest (39) and the age at marriage was the highest (21.9), while in UP—where the IMR was the highest (167)—the age at marriage was only 17.8 years.

According to the Survey of Causes of Death carried out by the Registrar General of India, 46 per cent of maternal deaths are in the age group 15-24. Apart from high maternal mortality rate there is also high maternal morbidity. In developing countries neo-natal and infant mortality for those born to mothers under 20 are 40 to 70 per cent higher than the average for all mothers.

In a study conducted by Dr Chuttani in villages near Delhi, the detrimental effect of early marriages was further corroborated. Of the sample women 48.6 per cent had their first child between 15 and 18 years. As a consequence, 46 per cent of the women were underweight for their height and 46.5 were undernourished. Their under-nourishment had partly occurred before marriage due to deprivations as a girl child and partly after marriage. About 30 per cent were grossly anaemic and 89 per cent had haemoglobin levels below 11 grams. Undernourished mothers had significantly larger number of children with grade II and grade III malnutrition reflecting the effect of maternal nutritional status during pregnancy on the child. Younger women also had more abortions. The study concluded that as age at marriage increases, the chances of spacing the children is better and therefore the goals of a planned family could be better attained by focussing better spacing efforts on 20-29 year old women.

Significant nuptiality differentials also exist between different States and between districts within States. The Singulate Mean Age at Marriage (SMAM) was the lowest in Rajasthan and the highest in Kerala. The Hindi-speaking States of Bihar, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh had a lower SMAM than the national average and also lower than the statutory minimum of 18 years. However, Orissa, a relatively poor State, had a high mean age.

The mean age at marriage of both males and females is notably higher in urban as compared to the rural areas. At the national level, half of the rural women were married by the age of 16 years. In the urban areas, the medians were higher. Hindu and Muslim women had a lower median age in rural areas while the Christians and Sikhs married later. Significant rural-urban differentials in median age at marriage exist among Hindus and Muslims but not among Christians and Sikhs.

Substantial nuptiality differentials are also found to exist between different socio-economic groups. Notable differences in age at marriage by religion and caste groups have also been observed.

Attainment of education, particularly of middle and higher levels, significantly influences the marriage age in India. The median age increases by six years from illiteracy to the graduate level. The median age increases gradually with the level of education both in the rural and urban areas. Female education at least upto the middle school level helps to attain the legal minimum age of 18 years.

Overall there is a substantial reduction in the proportion married in the younger age group; but these trends at younger ages have not affected the near universality of marriage which is attained in the age group 25-29 with 95 per cent married in the rural areas and 92 per cent in the urban areas.

Demographic Implications

The cumulative health, demographic and overall consequences of low age at marriage of girls is best described by the following statement:

> In India an estimated 10-15 per cent of around 25 million annual births take place to teenage mothers...Girls who marry before the age of 18 are twice as likely to end up with a large family as those who marry after completing 20 years and, therefore, not only face much higher risks in pregnancy when they first conceive, but face the risks and related ill-health several times more over their life time. The Indian woman on an average has 8-9 pregnancies, resulting in a little over six live births of which 4-5 survive. Together with lactation, she is estimated to spend 80 per cent of her reproductive years in pregnancy and lactation. (Shanti Ghosh; quoted by Rami Chabbra and Monica Sharma, 1987)

Educational Implications

There is a vital link between education/literacy and age at marriage. Higher and better educational attainment of girls tend to raise the age at marriage and vice-versa. Analysis of data vis-a-vis education and age at marriage reveals that at the national level median age at marriage rises both in the rural and urban areas with education. Even the educational level 'literate but below middle' (primary education) has pushed up the median age to 16.9 (from 15.8 for illiterates) in rural areas and to 17.2 (from 16.4 for illiterates) in urban areas.

Illiteracy is about 93 per cent among females in the youngest age group of below 20, that is, those who were married at ages 10-11 whille in age group 18-19 conforming to the legal age at marriage, only 65 per cent are illiterate. In their study in five districts of Orissa, Kanitkar Sinha noted that irrespective of the rural-urban locale, education had an independent effect on raising the age at marriage.

As a result of micro-level studies made in some States it was found that: a) the literacy status influences marriage ages positively; the higher the educational level the later the age at marriage (as a general observation primary schooling delayed marriage by one year and secondary by a further two years); b) the educational status of the wife is more effective in raising the age at marriage than the educational status of the husband; c) the influence of education on female age at marriage is not confined to the recent marriages; it had also influenced the older cohorts of married women.

Early marriage, particularly in the rural areas, is partly due to the lack of a viable alternative for young girls in the form of even limited educational facilities. Under the conditions prevaling in India apart from formal education, functionally relevant education even through non-formal means may trigger off a whole chain of modernisation effects including the most desirable consequences for female marital postponement.

Social Implications

Age at marriage is a key indicator of the status of women in a society. According to Hindu religion, marriage is obligatory. It is a religious rite (*sanskara*) that is prescribed for every Hindu. The Hindu marriage is also a contract between two families and the girl is gifted not just to the groom but to his family to honour and cherish. *Kanyadan*—the gift of a young girl, preferably pre-puberty and a virgin—is considered the best gift. Child marriage is also sanctioned by the scriptures. However, age at marriage does not always indicate consummation of the marriage and in many cases another ceremony, called the *gauna*, is performed when the bride goes to live with the groom.

In India more often than not women are treated as a commodity. The major role of women is to meet all the requirements of the members of the family and the society believes that women are not fit to be independent. At every stage in her life a woman should be under the core of someone, her father, her husband, or her son. (Manu compares the woman to a creeper that needs a perpetual support in order to stand up and survive.) The purpose of marriage was the tranference of the father's domination over her in favour of her husband and this transference was best achived before the girl reached the age when she might question it. Subjugation of women was further achieved through the custom of girls marrying men much older than them. While early marriage was mandatorily prescribed for the girl, the man was expected to complete at least 12 years of education. A man, therefore, was married at the age of 20 or later whereas the girl was married at the age of eight or earlier. This wide gap between the ages of the bride and the groom assured inequality between the partners, a tradition that continues even to this day.

Other social compulsions have been recorded for different States in India. In Andhra Pradesh, cross-cousin marriages are quite common, mainly as a means to retain property within the family. In Rajasthan the economic compulsion of a bride price was a crucial factor in early marriage. The practice of mass child marriages during the Teej festival is common in Rajasthan. The Tottil Nayakar community of Tamil Nadu practices cradle marriages when children are still in cradle. A cultural factor affecting early marriage in Northern Karnataka has been the custom of dedicating a girl as a Devadasi. Many parents marry off their young daughters much younger just to bypass the social pressure to dedicate them to the god under this system. In Madhya Pradesh among the Bedia community, at around 13 years the *ghungru* or ankle bells are tied to the feet of the girl suggesting initiation into dancing and singing only to be given away to a wealthy man as a keep. Just to avoid this, parents tend to marry their daughters at 13 years or earlier. The custom of marrying two or three daughters at the same time is also an offshoot of poverty, resulting in very young girls being married. Mass marriage in the lower castes which are seen as an economic necessity also lead to very young girls being married. Mass marriages in the lower castes—seen as an economic necessity—also lead to very young girls being married off to much older boys/men.

Early marriages also give security to the girl of the lower caste who may be out the whole day grazing cattle. Even if a girl is raped, once a girl is married she is accepted by her in-laws. An unmarried girl in rural India would not be accepted if sexually assaulted. The parents, therefore, feel relieved of responsibility when the girl is married. The marriage of young girls also costs less because her wrists and ankles are smaller and much less silver or gold would have to be invested for her ornaments.

Child marriage virtually destroys the joys of childhood. Young girls are forced into adult responsibilities when they should be studying and going to school. What is worse, young brides—often married to much older men—become child widows, either when they are very young or sometimes even before their marriage is consummated. They are shorn of all ornaments and ostracised from all social and religious functions. Even their shadow is believed to be unluckly and inauspicious. Their lives are over even before they have begun and many of them end up working as servants in the house of their in-laws. They are ill-treated, and their lives are barren and joyless.

Even though legislations (Civil Marriage Act 1872, Sarada Act 1929, Child Marriage Restraint Act 1978) have raised the legal age at marriage from 10 to 14 to 18, all these laws are followed in their breach and this is proved by the number of marriages taking place. During certain marriage seasons, marriage involving several brides and grooms are celebrated with fanfare.

Where such a deeply ingrained social custom is concerned, the law can have only limited effectiveness. As Gandhiji observed at the time of the enactment of the Sarada Act 1929, "it is not legislation that will cure a popular ill, it is enlightened public opinion that can do it." The very process of enactment of legislation in a diverse society like India is far ahead of the socio-economic and cultural contexts of the people. In the case of the poor it envisages their subscription to egalitarian development goals while continuing to struggle in unequal and feudal patterns of socio-economic and cultural injustice. In the case of the affluent and elite classes legislation is enacted with the full realisation that it cannot be made applicable to them if they do not want it to be enforced. The state cannot afford to exercise its law-making powers without an obligation to planned social development characterised by open access and equality. In other words, the Minimum Age Legislation is necessary but not sufficient in itself to secure the social objective of preventing early marriages, particularly in the rural areas. It has to be backed up by measures aimed at raising the status of women and creating a favourable social climate.

Urbanisation and development exercise a positive influence on the female age at marriage. Urbanisation provides larger opportunities for a non-familial role and its modernising influence removes the impact of traditions. Development is another factor that exerts a positive role on the age at marriage. It has been established that the age at marriage increases as the standard of living index rises. Another study examining the link between occupation and the female age at marriage shows that where agricultural labour is the occupation of the wife or husband, the average female age at marriage is the lowest while in the case of women who have service as their occupation, it is significantly higher at 16 years.

Strategies that Might Help to Raise the Age at Marriage

1. Education, health, economic independence and raising the status of women must be recognised as the vital ingredients for phasing out child marriages.
2. All social development must be planned keeping in mind the socio-economic and cultural matrix of any given cluster, group, community or area.
3. The school should become the centre of hope and attempts should be made to
   a) Fill in the vacant time between school leaving time and marriage, through expansion of pre-school education and ECE opportunities to inculcate school going habits in girls. Need for innovative models of ECE: skill and vocational training/income generating activities.
   b) Make the educational system more responsive to the needs of girls.
   c) Flexible school timings, age at entry, non-threatening policies and attitude towards families/repeaters, pace of learning, dropouts, etc.
   d) Flexible academic sessions to accommodate demands on girls' time during the peak agricultural seasons.
   e) More effective linkage between ICDS and the educational system—enabling older girls to attend school, leaving siblings at Anganwadi centres.
   f) Need for diversified, need-based curriculum for various categories of girls.
   g) Increasing the allocation for education in general and primary education in particular.
   h) Giving priority to the personal development and decision-making capacities of girls.
4. The sensitising of society, mobilisation of public opinion and broad awareness on the issue of the status of the girl child in general, and age at marriage in particular, must be done by
   a) Creating various fora in rural areas to generate discussion on issues and action for increasing age at marriage of girls.
   b) Creating awareness among parents and communities on causes and consequences of early marriage and availability of options, through NGOs, youth groups, formal rural leadership, caste leaders, etc.
   c) Mobilising public opinion in favour of higher age at marriage of girls through social and religious pundits, pressure groups such as panchayats, caste and religious leaders and political leaders.
   d) Exploring the potential of mass media in creating awareness and educating the people about the legal aspects of age at marriage.
   e) Changing the image of women as sex objects and creating an awareness among women towards evolving a new value system.
5. Education must be combined with income generating programmes.
6. Strong committed support to legislation on marriage, its propagation and continuous monitoring through the creation of a suitable mechanism.
7. Registration of marriages.
8. Social science research on the many social and cultural variables that must be incorporated into the planning process to make it effective in raising the age at marriage. ■

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SAARC Decade Action Plan for the Girl Child (1991-2000)

MOLLICA DASTIDAR

The plight of the girl child in the developing countries in general, and the South Asian region in particular, is far more serious than the concern so far being expressed in this regard by the governmental as well as voluntary organisations. As a result, the low status of the girl child and gender discrimination widely prevalant in the South Asian societies have hardly undergone any positive development, even when we are just a few years away from the twentyfirst century in which the human civilisation's scientific and technological development is about to reach its zenith.

The gap between girls and boys in respect of health, nutrition and education and discriminatory practices based on gender bias against girls are common features in all the states in South Asia. Thus considering the level of discrimination, the situation calls for a redoubled response, that is, initiatives at the state and regional levels to deal with this social evil.

NNMB dietary consumption data show that 13-16 year old girls consume less than two-thirds of the recommended calorie intake. Due to these dietary insufficiencies, girls in India do not achieve their full height and weight potential.

The regional body set up by the seven South Indian states, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), is yet to establish itself as an effective regional grouping politically or economically. The only field of cooperation among these seven countries covers the social and cultural spheres. However, the Association has been trying to make some efforts in other spheres as well. The SAARC's involvement in dealing with the problem of the girl child goes back to October 1986 when the SAARC Conference on Children emphasised the imperative need to improve the mother-child life-cycle, starting with the girl child. The SAARC Workshop on the Girl Child (September 1988) made several recommendations for country-specific plans of action within a framework of regional cooperation and exchange of experiences. The Islamabad SAARC Summit (1988) gave a collective call to the member-states to observe 1990 as the "SAARC Year of the Girl Child". In order to maintain the momentum of sustained action required to help uplift the girl child, the Male Summit (1990) decided that the years 1991-2000 be designated as the "SAARC Decade of the Girl Child".

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The definition of the girl child includes the adolescent girl, and the relevant age group for the Decade Plan is 0-20 years, as the problems faced by the girl child in Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka relate more to adolescence and equal opportunities for social mobility and work participation; while in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan problems confronting the girl child start even before her birth and continue into her adult life.

Pointing to the fact that effective action for the girl child can take place only at the level where she lives, that is, the family and the community, the Decade Plan therefore primarily focusses on that level and essential interventions by government and non-government agencies, however important, are seen as supportive to community level awareness.

Guiding Principles

The guiding principles of the SAARC Decade Plan of Action for the Girl Child are:

(i) the equality of status of the girl child will be ensured through special opportunities for her growth and development of her full potential as an individual and as a citizen in her own right;

(ii) without prejudice to the integration of the goals for the girl child with the goals for 'Children and Development' in the 1990s, her situation demands formulation of additional goals and strategies that are sensitive to her specific and multiple needs;

(iii) the socio-cultural discrimination prevailing against the girl child in South Asia, as revealed by demographic and socio-economic indicators, requires change in social attitudes and behavioural practices in relation to the development opportunities for her.

Additional SAARC Goals

In accordance with the second guiding principle *additional gender-specific SAARC goals* have been drawn up besides the major *global goals for child survival, development and protection.* For example, the SAARC Decade Plan of Action for the Girl Child identifies the goals of

(i) elimination of gender disparities in infant and under-five child mortality rates (whereas the global goal stands for the reduction of infant and under-five child mortality rate by one-third between 1990 and 2000);

(ii) emphasis on raising the present mean age at marriage by at least two years and postponing the first pregnancy till after the age of 20 (while the global goal mentions only of reduction of maternal mortality rate by half);

(iii) in respect of malnutrition, the goal is that of reduction of severe and moderate malnutrition among under-five children by half; the SAARC goal also stands for elimination of gender disparity in this regard.

Priority Concerns

The Decade Plan has identified the basic aspects of health andd nutrition, as well as education (where the gap between boys and girls in South Asia is quite wide), and the problem of early marriage and motherhood as its priority concerns.

1. Under its *health and nutrition* programme, by the year 2000

(a) it plans for reduction of infant and under-five mortality rate for girls by one-third the 1990 rate or to 50 and 70 per 1000 live births respectively whichever is less;

(b) reduction by half of severe and moderate malnutrition among girls under five years and starting among girls between 12-18 years.

2. Under the education and literacy programme, it hopes to achieve by the year 2000

(a) universal access to opportunities for basic education to girls under 16 years;

(b) completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of girls of primary school age;

(c) literacy for at least 80 per cent of out-of-school adolescent girls.

3. As regards marriage and motherhood, it is proposed to ensure by 2000

(a) reduction of the proportion of early marriage among girls, raising the present mean age at marriage by at least two years;

(b) postponement of first pregnancy till after the age of 20, thereby contributing to reduction in the rates of population growth as well as infant and maternal mortality.

Besides identifying the goals comprising the three priority concerns the Decade Plan also suggests measures which each member-country could adopt as policy support.

These measures are:

(i) declaring the goals for the girl child as stated in the SAARC Decade Plan of Action as national goals for the 1990s, with corresponding policy, resource and action commitments through the decade;

(ii) promoting community awareness and action; supported by effective enforcement of regulatory measures with the active involvement of the community;

(iii) parent-community-public education highlighting the potential of girls to contribute to family income; also on the negative implications of early marriage to her development and that of her children.

And for implementing the Plan of Action, it suggests:

(a) periodic analysis of the situation and status of girls in relation to national development policies and programme;

(b) family incentive schemes such as "Food for Education" and similar support;

(c) funding a variety of activities under the Decade Plan based on a policy decision to substantially increase hard core investment of public resources for basic human development (in this perspective special efforts are to be made by the member-states to allocate resources in support of additional services and facilities required for the girl child);

(d) linkages with sectoral programmes of health, education, nutrition and economic development.

Thus, the basic objective of the SAARC Decade Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000) is to strengthen mutual exchange of knowledge and support among the member-states in order to reach the common goals for the upliftment of the girl child throughout South Asia.

The Decade Plan for the Girl Child is the centre-piece of the SAARC Regional Programme of Action for "Children and Development" in the 1990s. This inter-country collaboration for regionwide progress will be promoted through steps like:

(i) gender-specific comparative studies and analyses;

(ii) sharing of documented information and experience;

(iii) periodic dissemination of compiled and analysed gender-sensitive information on children in South Asia;

(iv) systematic joint review of the situation of the girl child and progress towards the goals set, as part of the annual reporting to the SAARC Summit on the state of South Asian children.

The above-mentioned programmes are thus drawn up by the SAARC under its Decade Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000) for the upliftment of the status of the girl child and for bringing in a radical change in the attitude of the societies in the region towards the girl child in South Asia. In a sense a year or even a decade is not enough for bringing about such a revolutionary change, since the neglect and discrimination of the girl child are deeply rooted in the complex set of our social, cultural and historical values. Therefore, we need to have a sustained process of social mobilisation to fight relentlessly the existing discrimination against the girl child in our societies. To eradicate this social evil practised for centuries we must have a holistic approach, and make brave new efforts to improve the girl child's standard of health and education and also to develop an atmosphere in which she gets every opportunity to develop her full potential. And the process of social mobilisation alone will make the girl child everybody's concern—mass media, the family and community as well as the government and voluntary agencies. ■

Notes

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The Kohl Visit in Retrospect

K P BHANUMATHY

The much-publicised visit of the German Chancellor, Dr Helmut Kohl, ostensibly to receive the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding was the highlight of the week. The hectic week which also coincided with the Tenth Indian Engineering Trade Fair (IETF) was a merry-go-around with luncheons, seminars and cultural sparkle culminating in Ambassador Wieck's garden party where one and all met for high tattle. Nearly 2000 Germans were in India in full strength with the Chancellor's entourage of nearly 50 high ranking officials. Bankers, businessmen, corporate heads and industrial bigwigs rubbing shoulders with Indian business giants, that made a witty member of the diplomatic corps crack: "You are having a German invasion!"

Chancellor Kohl received the prestigious Nehru Award for his important contribution towards German unification and a monetary, social and economic union of Europe. The IETF, of which Germany happened to be a country partner, was undoubtedly a success in that it generated a positive achievement with three prominent Federal states—Baden-Wurttenburg, Bavaria and North-Rhine Westfalia—holding pride of place. The continuous flow of German high level delegates representing industry and super technology and economy—all geared to reach a practical understanding for the promotion of collaborations—went to make the 'German week' in India a success.

As the German Ambassador in India, Dr Hans Georg Wieck, said, Chancellor Kohl's visit had three purposes: (i) to receive the prestigious Nehru Award; (ii) a dialogue on key global, regional and bilateral problems with the Indian Government; and (iii) a visit to the IETF where "German industry occupied 6200 square metres of space". The German interaction with India spans nearly four decades of trade partnership which last year reached six billion DM in CIF terms (Rs 11,400 crores). India's place is 35th in German imports and 39th position in German exports while Germany ranks second in Indian imports and holds the fourth position in Indian exports. In fact German exports to India had recorded a 22 per cent increase last year while India's exports dropped by seven per cent; now Germany has an export surplus of 70,000 DM.

German investments in India last year touched Rs 958.1 million, the total investment standing at Rs 19,536 billion from the more than a hundred collaborations between the two countries, one-third being financial and two-thirds in the technological sector. Bilateral development cooperation reached Rs 952 million in 1992. Since the economic reforms were introduced German industrialists have shown a keen interest in investing in India—last year 200 new agreements were signed—but the total number of collaborations in operation is 960, that is, less than seven per cent of the total collaborations that had been approved by both parties. There are 190 joint ventures which is not saying much considering the potential and possibilities especially after the liberalisation of the MRTP rules, FERA, import of capital goods and OGL.

Development aid now covers new areas of rural education, rural water supply, sanitation, lift irrigation and forestry—areas on which Chancellor Kohl laid great emphasis. German aid also comes through multilateral institutions. As far as science and technology is concerned, nearly 120 projects are in operation (earlier 500 projects were completed). A number of MOUs were signed with Siemens for joint ventures in potash, mining, gas based industries worth over Rs 20 crores. Agreements were also reached for soft loans worth Rs 160 crores on 0.75 per cent interest with 10 years grace over a 40-year repayment period for financing lift irrigation in Orissa and as credit to the ICICI.

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AT his press conference Chancellor Kohl said that he could not give a guarantee on rasing the aid amount that had dropped as Germany had made commitments to the former Warsaw pact member-countries and Russia which, he pointed out, were important neighbours in the East. In 1992 bilateral development cooperation had reached Rs 952 crores and since 1958 Germany contributed 14 billion DM. Dr Kohl said he would like to see others contributing more than in the past and invited Indian investors to make a pitch investing in Germany. He was determined to find German investments increase in India within a year, and felt confident after his talks with Prime Minister Narasimha Rao that many of the bureaucratic hurdles would be removed.

Chancellor Kohl stressed on a new quality of friendship with India and improving transport and communication facilities. German investors, he disclosed, will put in their money only where the growth potential was high and upto-date infrastructural facilities existed. Some of the complaints aired through Chancellor Kohl were those that one had heard often from investors abroad: the Indian administrative machinery moves at a snail's pace and is bound by outmoded rules and regulations.

Dr Kohl was confident that the more India pushed ahead with the liberalisation drive the more would it get integrated into the global economy. His suggestion for an agreed programme for implementation of selected schemes within a time-frame was accepted by the Indian Prime Minister who would do a stock taking before his visit to Bonn later this year. On international affairs Dr Kohl said the unification of Germany was a dream come true. But the financial cost of that dream had turned the German people to despair and could cost the dynamic Chancellor some votes in the next elections. On the Maastricht Treaty he said he was hopeful that the UK and Denmark would ratify the Treaty and by 1995 the other Scandinavian countries would also join. He regretted that the GATT negotiations were being delayed.

On India not signing the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty he said:

> It is of enormous importance as the danger posed by proliferation of arms is serious. I have respect for India's views and efforts need to be made to remove India's reservations. But India not signing the Treaty will not affect Indo-German relations.

On Kashmir he desired a bilaterial solution through Indo-Pakistan negotiations on the basis of the 1972 (Shimla) Treaty.

On the whole the visit added a new dimension to Indo-German relations and imparted the much-needed impetus to bilateral cooperation that is expected to substantially rise in the days ahead. ■

(February 23)

LOK JUMBISH PARISHAD

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Lok Jumbish Parishad is an innovative project aiming to achieve basic education for all by the year 2000 through peoples' mobilisation, their participation and teachers' involvement. The specific goals are: universalisation of primary education, womens' development and improving quality of education. Applications are invited from candidates with relevant background and experience, presently working either in Government of Rajasthan, Government of India, PSU's, Autonomous Institutions and NGO's, for following posts: Project Officer, Assistant Project Officer and *Samyukta*. The Project Officer (gross emoluments Rs 4000/ pm) shall be responsible to implement the scheme in his/her area of operation, the Assistant Project Officer (gross emoluments Rs 3000/ pm) would assist the Project Officer in teacher training, non-formal education and environment building etc, and *Samyukta* (gross emoluments Rs 3500/),reserved for women candidates, would assist the Project Officer in womens' development and early childhood care and education.

The assignment demands ability to conceptualise, good interpersonal relations, good written and oral communication skills in Hindi, organisational ability to function effectively in rural environment. Selected candidates will be initially appointed upto May 1994; decision regarding further extension would be taken in March 1994.

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A Retrograde Move in South Africa

HARI SHARAN CHHABRA

While the three-year period since the release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC) and other anti-apartheid organisations is dotted with countless and nerve-shattering acts of violence and political deadlocks and stalemates, there has been some hope lately of a breakthrough that could lead to an all-race elections for a South African Constituent Assembly and the formation of the Government of National Unity.

In this connection there remains much confusion, with the power-sharing talk by President F.W. de Klerk and a proposal for a transition to full democracy in South Africa, in which Blacks and Whites would govern together for a period of five years, coming from the ANC.

But strange are the ways of de Klerk, the so-called reformist. One fails to understand the logic of bringing at this junture two mixed-race Coloureds and an Indian into his government, when the talk of an Interim Government of National Unity is very much in the air. It is pertinent to remember that the two Coloureds and the Indian are members of the tri-cameral Parliament, one each for the Whites, Indians and the Coloureds. This tri-cameral system is a product of the South African Constitution upholding the abominable apartheid system, for it denies vote and Parliament to the 80 per cent Black majority.

And look at de Klerk's audacity when he says that after consulting people of all races he decided that to appoint a Black Minister in his Cabinet would probably be counterproductive "at the present delicate stage of negotiations".

It is no surprise that the ANC has condemned the changes in the South African Cabinet as "irrelevant". The country's premier political grouping has said it did nothing to further Black-White relations. The ANC spokesman, Carl Niehaus, said the changes were irrelevant because the new Ministers were all drawn from within the discredited apartheid system. "It smacks very much of tokenism," he said.

The three non-White Ministers will be holding unimportant portfolios of Sports, Tourism, and Population Development. Yet a beaming Abe Williams, a Coloured, said he expected to be a full member of the government. "We will be part of the Cabinet and part of the general policy discussion." It is all laughable when this henchman of the White minority government says that to dwell on the injustices of apartheid was "to look back when one should look forward".

To say the least, de Klerk's induction of two Coloureds and an Indian in his government is a retrograde step. De Klerk's move has come when there is a demand for the establishment of a transitional executive council, the establishment of an independent electoral and media commission and determination of the date for elections to the Constituent Assembly. His sincerity in building a new South Africa—democratic and non-racial—that has always been in doubt, has now been fully exposed to the charge of double-speak. It will not be off the mark to say that he wants to send a signal to his countrymen and to the world that he is not dictated by the ANC.

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WHILE he is holding secret political parleys with the ANC, giving the impression of moving politically forward, there is little doubt that the South African President and his colleagues consider the ANC as "Enemy Number One", especially because the ANC is steadfastly sticking to its alliance with the South African Communist Party. By taking Coloureds and the Indian in his Cabinet he is obviously hoping to enlarge the White constituency of his ruling National Party, which has already opened its doors to people of other races. But as the coming days will show, this was a judgement of error, as it will give a boost to the ANC's political image for the coming elections.

The crisis of confidence and the environment of political mistrust has been given a body blow by de Klerk's latest move. One wonders how after such an ugly move by de Klerk, multiparty constitutional negotiations can begin next month. The ANC could decide against further political parleys with the government.

At the same time, unremitting, rather escalating, violence, which has claimed about 8000 lives in three years, is bound to come in the way of political progress. The ANC, however, feels that the first elections, open to all races, should go ahead despite violence, but the Inkatha Freedom Party of the Zulu leader, Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, says it is out of question that a Constituent Assembly can be elected in "unfree and unfair elections" in the current climate of violence and intimidation.

Even if the ANC and the National Party Government choose to close ranks in the coming weeks, Buthelezi, the spoiler and wrecker, has the capacity to throw their plans into disarray. He minces no words when he gives threats of "bloodshed and misery". Buthelezi, who fears being sidelined in the political struggle for power, seems dead earnest about his federal plans in a democratic South Africa. He wants virtual autonomy, if not full independence, for his Kwazulu-Natal region. Some other Homeland leaders, especially Ciskei and Bophuthatswana, also stand by Buthelezi's side on the federal set-up idea. At this stage a statement by Frank Mdlalose, Buthelezi's Number Two, comes to one's mind: "We cannot allow our future to be decided by the government and the ANC only."

Buthelezi's close alliance with the White Right-wing neo-Nazi groups sounds ominous, given the proud warrior traditions of the Afrikanners and the Zulus. Western analysts believe that the Zulu chief could take up arms to fight the ANC-National Party alliance, following the example of Angola's UNITA warlord, Jonas Savimbi.

The Zulus constitute the largest tribe in South Africa, six million strong, but Buthelezi's support base among his people has never been tested. Some opinion polls do not give Buthelezi more than 15 per cent Zulu votes, yet the Zulu leader will remain a major political irritant. ■

GEORGE: Railway Budget

(Continued from page 7)

thousand kilometers of Railway track would cost about Rs 1000 crores and generate about eight lakh jobs, upstream and downstream with the track in the centre.

The stimulus this would give to the economy of the area through which this line would pass will be a gift to the nation. Gauge conversion does not create new jobs while it may bloat a few local political egos. The budget shows that from the actual Rs 254 crore investment for new lines in 1991-92 and a revised estimate of Rs 226 crores in 1992-93, the allocation for 1993-94 is only Rs 188 crores; while gauge conversion has jumped from the actual investment of Rs 133 crores in 1991-92 to the revised estimate of Rs 559 crores in 1992-93 to an allocation of Rs 815 crores in 1993-94. The number of jobs that have been lost thanks to "project unigauge" is not difficult to calculate.

Politicians, particularly in our country, are notorious for diverting public funds to their constituencies—of course, for devlopmental work. In the process they tend to forget that they have taken an oath by the Constitution to act without fear or favour while discharging their duties. This tendency may be an extension of their propensity for self-aggrandisement. Be that as it may, the Railway Minister seems to have ignored the more backward States in India, particularly Bihar, Orissa, Assam, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh while allocating funds for the various works to be undertaken during 1993-94. This must further accentuate the already existing regional disparities and create resentment among the people against the Union Government.

The Economic Survey for 1992-93 laments about the progressive decline in the share of freight carried by the Railways, even though rail transport is more energy-efficient and environment-friendly. And, of course, cost-effective.

Unfortunately, there seem to be powerful road transport lobbies in the government and particularly in the Railway Ministry, which take care to see that the awareness shown in the lament is not translated into policies. And now, with privatisation of various categories in the Railways already set in motion, and the Railways left to fend for themselves financially, there may not be much hope of any great improvement in Railway services in the near future.

One notices that there has been job reductions taking place in the Railways. The documents circulated with the budget papers show that about 15,400 jobs have been lost in certain specific categories in 1991-92 over the figures of 1990-91. That is before formal privatisation programmes were set in motion. The figures of 1992-93 will have a much more sad story to tell.

On a personal note, I feel that my decision to set up the Konkan Railway Corporation to construct the West Coast Railway has been vindicated by the Railway Budget. With Rs 188 crores for new lines all over the country, Konkan Railway would have had to wait for many more decades to become a reality. The Railway Minister has said that "the project is proceeding according to schedule". That means it will be completed in October 1994. ■

(Courtesy: *The Economic Times*)

Akshay Kumar Jain

MRINAL PANDE

On the morning of February 25, when the city of Delhi, jointly besieged by the police and the BJP, was holding its breath, the veteran Hindi editor, Akshay Kumar Jain, gently faded away into the mists of eternity. He did not really belonged to this Delhi of 1993, a city of undemocratic rallies and even more undemocratic bans; of ugly recriminations swapped within and between political parties; of paranoid press, paralysed Parliament and petrified citizens huddled in front of TV sets, waiting to be told if the state was there or not to protect them.

Everything known about our Indian-language writers and journalists, outside their States, has mostly been available at second hand. The Hindi language, so inaccessible to the Anglophile minority that decides the 'Who's Who' of the Indian journalistic scene, has always been somewhat like an opaque glass bell-jar to them. When editors of publications in Indian languages do get cited for awards or decorations, they are discussed without a basic knowledge about their work. Bitter and catty speculations about the rise of Hindi and *Hindutva* in the Hindi belt are similarly floated without any inkling of the heroic life-and-death struggle being waged by many Hindi journals and papers for the survival of a secular press in a benighted area of increasing illiteracy and violent political happenings.

Akshay Kumar Jain was one such figher. Born in December 1915, he became an editor at an age when most journalists cut their professional teeth. Soon he was invited to join *Navbharat* (later *Navbharat Times*) whose Chief Editor he became in 1954, a post he was to hold for the next twentythree years. It was during his editorship that the *Navbharat Times* became a widely circulating newspaper with a committed readership what many would jeeringly describe as "*Doodhwala Bhaiyas and Banias and trans-Jamuna colonywallahs*"! It was a readership that grew more demanding and politically astute with the times and whom Akshay Kumar Jain, to his great credit, never ceased caring for and worrying about. To the younger editors who followed him in the profession, his advice was to cater to this readership always but also never to present a whining and '*garib*' picture of the Hindi editor to either the proprietors or the power-wielding mandarins of New Delhi. "Make very sure they give you everything they are giving them English-language editors and journalists)," he would say, "these things may not matter to you personally, but they are a direct indication in this town of the esteem in which the system holds you." He used to recount how when he turned fifty, Kakasaheb Kalelkar and a few close friends arranged a function to felicitate him. After he function he suddenly felt that unless he challenged he unfair dual-wage structure that existed within the set-up, he'd retire with a chip on his shoulder and take o what he described as 'anti-social' activities. So he wrote, he said, to the proprietress, Rama Jain, offering his resignation on grounds of discrimination in wages. The resignation, to the credit of the house, was not accepted and Jain's justified grievances were met. Wage parity for reporters and sub-editors followed in due course.

The author is the Editor of the Hindi weekly, Saptahik Hindustan.

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AS an editor Jain's efforts were neither Quixotic, nor Utopian. His great innovation did not consist of instilling his paper with ponderous editorials on pompous speeches by the high and mighty. He was faithful to the tradition of the Hindi language which had, during the freedom struggle, represented the still small voice of the Majority and now needed a media space and assets commensurate with its size. He began a tradition that constantly challenged (even while it highlighted) news as it is distributed on the basis of discrimination in the Capital first in English to the Englishwallahs, and then to the others, including the Hindi media.

Under his stewardship *Navbharat Times* fought prejudice, but did not become either a kind of subjective and escapist rag or a hysterical appeal for *Hindutva*. The arrogance of the bureaucratic machinery and the anti-Hindi biases harboured by many in the socio-political arena could well have forced the paper into that direction, but Akshay Kumar Jain did not allow this. The paper became rather a tool of delving into the real mind of the Hindi belt and unmasking both the Hindi area as also the system in all its brilliance and often also a certain latent silliness. Gradually the greater cultural vitality of the Indian languages ensured the paper an enviably large readership that no English daily in the Capital could match. By the time Jain quit the paper on August 1, 1977, *Navbharat Times* was an institution of sorts.

Ever a good salesman, Jain was perhaps the first Hindi editor to bring about an alchemical blending of dream and reality in Hindi journalism, and also to create an autonomous structure in which one assumes responsibility for both who one writes for, and what. Those of us who had known him over the decades shall miss Akshayji's humane warmth, his quirky sense of humour, and his great catholicity of mind. He typified to most of us, media practitioners in the Indian languages battling the cultural reductivism of English, with all the ingenuity that the poor and neglected are capable of. Through his guerilla warfare techniques he managed eventually to penetrate the colonising force of an intellectual coterie that cuts most Indians off from each other more firmly than caste or religion. He also revealed the total inadequacy of English as a real instrument of sound cultural and political discourse in a democracy like India. Had the politicians and the English press listened to the likes of him more carefully, they would not be facing today the possibility of a total rout by the forces of *Hindutva* in the area (or areas) from whence cometh help and, of course, the Vote. ■

Remembering H.N. Wanchoo

INDER MOHAN

The dastardly assassination of H.N. Wanchoo on the afternoon of December 5, 1992 in Srinagar sent shock-waves throughout Kashmir and outside. According to the official version, an 'unknown assailant' shot at Wanchoo from close range and 'managed' to escape. The Kashmir Government dare not blame any of the militant groups because Wanchoo was deeply respected by one and all.

Personally, I am convinced that this heinous act was the handiwork of an officially-sponsored killer. A brief account of Wanchoo's activities would explain why his life-long dedication to the cause of the people had become a challenge to the reactionary Establishment.

Fortyeight year old H.N. Wanchoo started his public career in his early twenties as a trade unionist. Simultaneously, he made a thorough study of Kashmir's chequered history of the last six centuries. Thus, he became a scholar in his own right.

His contribution in organising labour employed in silk and woollen industry, carpet weaving, and several other crafts, alongwith those in the agricultural sector and those engaged in construction work, was unique. None of the unions organised under his initiative in a feudal State like Kashmir, was affiliated to any political party and they fought for their basic rights on their own strength.

Wanchoo's most significant role came to light when the political turmoil in Kashmir took an agonising turn 1980 onwards. During this phase, he launched his peaceful struggle against the calculated intrigue by the powers-that-be, to communalise the State politics (which became more obvious during Jagmohan's regime). It was Jagmohan who hatched the conspiracy of sending Kashmiri pandits in batches out of the Valley. He told them that the government had to take action against all those Kashmiri Muslims who were 'agents of Pakistan'. While flushing them out, so he told them, it would be difficult for the security forces to distinguish between a Kashmiri Muslim and a pandit. Under this pretext, Jagmohan requisitioned special buses to send the pandits outside the Valley. He assured them that the government would make adequate arrangements for their rehabilitation. He further assured them that within six months they could all come back when all 'anti-national' Muslims would be either behind bars, or eliminated. Nevertheless, the prosperous pandits and the not-so-equals soon realised that the latter part of Jagmohan's assurances could not be fulfilled in such a short span of time. But they continued to look up to him and his mentor, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). In the meanwhile, the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and several other Muslims made fervent appeals to the pandits not to play into the hands of Jagmohan. Wanchoo was an active supporter of this call.

The author, a veteran social activist who played a remarkable role against the Emergency regime (1975-77), is President of the Indian People's Human Rights Commission.

By then the tussle between the JKLF and Hizbul Mujahidin had become well-known. The basic difference was that while the Hizbul Mujahidin openly stood for Kashmir joining Pakistan, the JKLF wanted freedom of Kashmir from the domination of both India and Pakistan Wanchoo at this critical juncture made serious efforts to bring about an understanding between the two groups and appealed to both to fight unitedly for the recognition of Kashmiri identity, and for their right of freedom from any outside domination. Although the JKLF and Hizbu Mujahidin have been the most active groups, there had by then mushroomed some thirty odd groups. Quite a few of them were Establishment-sponsored.

During this phase, whenever any non-Muslim was kidnapped and held hostage it was Wanchoo's mediatory efforts which brought about the release of many of them. He kept on appealing to the migrant pandits to return to the Valley and to join hands with their Muslim brethren and thus maintain the age-old secular character of the State. There are still 5000 Kashmiri pandits in Srinagar city alone. The well-to-do pandits scoffed at the idea but the lower middle class ones began to seriously think about all that Wanchoo and the JKLF stood for.

During Jagmohan's regime there were numerou cases of killings, arson, torture and deaths in custody, extortion, rape, etc. All these crimes are continuing unabated during the present regime too. This savagery becomes apparent if one goes to the villages of the Valley and to the lanes and bylanes of the big towns and thei suburbs. There is now no doubt in the minds of th people in the Valley that the administrations in Kashmi all along played the BJP game. The State-abetted communal elements floated a rumour that 54 Hindu temples had been destroyed in the Kashmir Valley by the Muslims. This was a blatant lie and the impartial Pandit Wanchoo was among the first to deny this anti-Muslim canard.

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ALONGWITH his fight against communalism, Wancho played the role of an ardent human rights activist. He meticulously listed all the cases of inhuman atrocitie perpetrated against the people. He exposed those terroris groups which had been intentionally let loose by the

Establishment to foment trouble and thus provide justification for its repressive action. Wanchoo further brought home the fact to one and all that 95 per cent of the State Muslims had never been for Pakistan and that the JKLF's record in this respect was crystal-clear.

Not only that, Wanchoo's tireless efforts succeeded in making vital sections of Hizbul Mujahidin rethink that they should join hands with the JKLF. Obviously, it was impossible for the Establishment to tolerate any of Wanchoo's initiatives bearing fruit.

At a time when the heads of the Border Security Force and police were hell-bent on eliminating as many Kashmiri Muslim youths as they could, and throwing the dead bodies to float in the river Jhelum in their futile bid to terrorise the people of the Valley into submission, Wanchoo had been in the forefront in exposing all these barbarities before the various human rights bodies in the subcontinent and abroad.

At present Kashmiris in the Valley have come to realise that both India and Pakistan are only interested in possessing the territory of Kashmir and not in the least bit concerned about the people. The Kashmiris are aware of the fact that the movement for regional and other fundamental human rights has gained much strength in Pakistan. The people there are facing identical inhuman brutalities. This factor has made the JKLF within India and Pakistan forge a unity amongst the people of Kashmir in defiance of both the governments. This development has not only created panic in the ruling juntas of India and Pakistan but at some level has brought both the Establishments, their hostilities notwithstanding, to an understanding to curb with an iron hand any such move on the part of the people. Wanchoo stood for united action on the part of the Kashmiris in the subcontinent.

Wanchoo's activities, though absolutely peaceful, were in direct opposition to the Establishment's policies. He had also become a thorn in the flesh of all pro-BJP elements and the Establishment as a whole.

Before his assassination, Wanchoo had come to Delhi to apprise human rights groups of the latest situation in the Jammu and Kashmir State. He was shot at soon after his return. Both the JKLF and Hizbul Mujahidin jointly gave a call for a peaceful protest and there was a total strike in the Valley. Thus a remarkable man with a rare courage of conviction and with exceptional vision was eliminated by a highly centralised and brutalised Establishment which adamantly declines to concede regional rights to the people. In contrast to the anti-people policies of the Establishments (of India and Pakistan), Wanchoo firmly believed that the people of Kashmir could be a permanent bridge of lasting peace between the peoples of the subcontinent. Wanchoo paid with his life for the principles he cherished. ■

ARUN GHOSH : Soft Option

(Continued from page 3)

would be the most charitable description. It is more than a "soft" budget. It is soft on the rich and harsh on the States and the poor of the country; it is a budget obviously drawn up to please the IMF and the World Bank; it is a budget placed before the country possibly with a view to early general elections, so as to elicit popular support before the facade of the "soft budget" is ripped off by the harsh reality of inevitable developments consequent on the Budget.

What are the basic problems before the country, and how does the 1993-94 Budget seek to address them? The two immediate problems are: (a) achieving macro economic balance internally, and (b) achieving an equilibrium in the balance of Indian's external payments. The *medium term* problem is the improvement of the average (aggregative) productivity of labour and also to provide productive employment opportunities to all job-seekers, in other words, to all adults in the country, and to improve the health and nutrition of all. The longer term problem is to provide universal education, better quality education, and to impart better skills, so that there may be a dramatic improvement in standards of living, and with that, a dramatic decline in the rate of population growth. Emphasis on the development of the backward sections of the population has to be an essential ingredient of both medium and longer term strategy.

Let us examine how the 1993-94 Budget proposes to address these problems. On internal balance, the Budget may be stated to have attempted to resolve the problem, not by taxing the rich but by a severe overall monetary/ fiscal constraint which impinges especially harshly on the State Governments.

This is an important point and needs elaboration. The Budget for 1993-94 has projected an overall budgetary deficit of Rs 4314 crores. Assuming the GDP to grow by four per cent in 1993-94 with an average inflation rate of five per cent, the GDP in 1993-94 (at current prices) should be approximately Rs 665 billion. (The *Economic Survey* gives the GNP in 1992-93, at current prices, to be Rs 610 billion.) At this level, the overall budgetary deficit—or creation of Reserve Money—would be no more than 6.5 per cent of the GDP. (We are, for the present, not drawing the fine distinction between the GDP and the GNP; by and large, earned income from Indian expatriates abroad could largely neutralise the income of foreign nationals earned in India.)

This would have been a reasonable set of parameters for bringing the economy into beter macro economic balance. But this supposed balance has been achieved despite a massive "give away" of Rs 4522 crores (the relief in customs duty accounting for Rs 3273 crores; and the relief in excise duty on, by and large, consumer goods catering to demand from the affluent sections of the population accounting for Rs 1249 crores). There has been no increase in direct taxes, only some minor concessions in regard to standard deduction for tax purposes.

So, everybody appears to be happy. But consider the following figures of Plan transfers to States, which have (understandably) been glossed over by the Finance Minister in his budget speech.

Table 1
Plan Transfers to States and Union Territories

(Rs crores)

	1992-93 (Revised)	1993-94 (Budget)
1. Block grants for State Plan schemes	6154	6104
2. Block loans for State Plan schemes	7222	7134
Subtotal	13,377	13,238
3. Loans to Rural Electrification Corporation	138	160
4. Loans for small savings	4400	3500
5. Total gross transfers to States for Plan Schemes (Demand No. 29), *other than statutory transfers*	17,915	16,898

It would be seen that other than statutory transfers [as, for example, under Article 275(1) of the Constitution, or as recommended by the Ninth Finance Commission], there has been a decline in Central transfers to the States and Union Territories in 1993-94, by as much as Rs 1017 crores.

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THE above is not all. The above transfers are *gross* amounts allocated. The Centre gets back part of what it lends by way of repayment of part of the principal and payment of interest on the outstanding loans by the States. Table 2 brings out these receipts of the Centre (from the States and the UTs):

Table 2
Recoveries from States and UTs by the Centre

(Rs crores)

	1992-93 (Revised)	1993-94 (Budget)
1. Recoveries of past loans from States and Uts	3381	4106
2. Recoveries of interest on past loans from States and UTs	7750	9767
3. Total recoveries	11,131	13,873

It would be seen that total recoveries have gone up from Rs 11,131 crores in 1992-93 to Rs 13,873 crores in 1993-94—an increase of Rs 2742 crores. In fact, deducting the recoveries from the transfers, one would get a *net* transfer of resources (for the Plan) from the Centre to the States and UTs of Rs 6784 crores in 1992-93, which goes down to only Rs 3025 crores in 1993-94.

In other words, the Centre has been soft on businessmen, on the rich, on the affluent consumers. It has been harsh on the State Governments which, in terms of the Finance Minister's own reply to a query on the television, are responsible for providing social services like education. It is indeed somewhat brazen to claim to have increased the outlay on rural development, on agriculture, on education and health, even as the net Plan allocation to the States is being cut by more than 55 per cent. (Note: Transfers under small savings have been added to Plan transfers because the figures of recoveries include both the principal and interest payments on small savings which are transferred to the States.)

So, the concessions in the Budget are very clearly at the cost of the State Governments. This point need not be laboured any further. The pity of it is that the increases in outlay (on rural development, agriculture, education, health, *et al.*) are in respect of Central or Centrally-sponsored schemes. Any number of reports of independent commissions and committees—including the voluminous findings of Prof A.M. Khusro—point to the inefficiency and leakages in Central intevertion and funding in areas which ought to be the responsibility of local authorities.

The second short-term objective of the Budget is the management of external payments. In fact, the *raison d'etre* of the economic reform programme initiated in July 1991 was the severe crisis in external payments faced by the country in the summer of 1991. We have already seen that, as compared to a current account deficit of $2.8 billion in 1992-93, the deficit in 1992-93 is now projected (in the *Economic Survey* prepared by the Ministry of Finance) at $7 billion. We have also seen that the *Survey* has gone on to suggest that such deficits in external payments would continue over the medium term.

We get authorisations of gross external aid to the tune of some $6 billion a year. In 1991-92, as per the *Economic Survey*, gross aid disbursements were $4.69 billion. That is, our utilisation of concessional aid was much less than the aid authorised. Part of the reason is that the projects are mainly in the States' sector, and State Governments are perennially short of cash. So, the implementation of projects gets delayed and the actual disbursement of aid funds is also low. This year's Budget seeks to remedy this situation by passing on the benefits of external aid to the State Governments (which were earlier appropriated wholly by the Centre). If as a consequence, we can effectively utilise $6 billion of external aid, and if we can bring our merchandise trade account into balance, we are likely to have no pressure on our balance of payments. In fact, confidence in the Indian economy can come only with a rough balance in the current account of our external payments.

Budget • Bombay Riots • Call for National Renewal

Mainstream

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EDITORIAL

A Costly Crack-up

The dramatic announcement by Jayalalitha Jayaram, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and General Secretary of the AIADMK ruling the State, that her party was snapping its longstanding alliance with the Congress and withdrawing support to the Narasimha Rao Government at the Centre was not unexpected given the strains that had developed in the ties between the two parties over the last three months. Since the time the Ramamurthy faction of the TNCC began openly criticising her it was clear that the relationship was tenuous and could break off at any point unless prompt steps were taken by the central leadership to repair the damage. The recently held Narasimha Rao-Jayalalitha meeting over luncheon at the latter's Madras residence conveyed the false impression that the problems between the two parties had been sorted out. It did not take long for the impression to evaporate as the two parties resumed trading charges against each other after the meeting.

Nevertheless, there is no denying that the Congress circles in the Capital have been dazed by Jayalalitha's announcement on Tuesday (March 9, 1993) night. Despite the deteriorating relationship between the two there was a feeling in the ruling party at the Centre that the Congress and the AIADMK would eventually be able to resolve their differences and preserve their alliance. But that was not to be.

The AIADMK support to the Congress has always been crucial for the stability of the Congress rule at the Centre. The significance of this support was heightened after the 1991 Lok Sabha poll in which no political party could secure absolute majority in the Lower House of Parliament. Hence it was anticipated that the Congress would strive its best to ensure the continuance of its alliance with the ruling party in Tamil Nadu.

As elsewhere in Tamil Nadu too the Congress is beset with rampant factionalism. One faction, led by G.K. Moopanar, has all along advocated dissociation from the AIADMK. The other group, headed by K. Ramamurthy, the TNCC President, was in favour of maintaining close ties with Jayalalitha. However, at a later stage it was Ramamurthy who fired salvoes against Jayalalitha's alleged tilt towards the BJP on the Ayodhya issue and levelled a series of charges against her. That led to the present crisis with Jayalalitha taking a serious view of the accusations and demanding disciplinary action against the TNCC chief from the side of the Congress' central leadership.

The Congress in Tamil Nadu has charged the Jayalalitha regime with corruption and displaying authoritarian proclivities. But even if the two factions of the State Congress are functioning jointly today, the fact remains that it was intense factionalism in the TNCC that prevented it from playing an effective role in State politics and exercising a salutary influence on the AIADMK. The net outcome of the Congress-AIADMK division has been an opening to the BJP to curry favour with Jayalalitha and widen its limited presence in the South. Indeed the Congress has largely itself to blame for this development whose impact on the national political scene would not be inconsequential.

Political commentators close to the Congress are of the view that withdrawal of support by the 11-member AIADMK group in the Lok Sabha would not threaten the Central Government's stability. That is because this is expected to be offset by the support that the splitaway Ajit Singh group of the Janata Dal is to extend to it. However, what is being missed in such an observation is the haggling that is bound to precede the extension of support on the part of the group. Secondly, the anticipation that the non-BJP Opposition would not vote out the Narasimha Rao Government is based on certain presumptions that do not rest on strong foundations, particularly when the third Manmohan Singh Budget has failed to dilute the sharp edge of the Left parties' antipathy to the new economic policies fashioned by the IMF and the World Bank. In fact the snapping of the Congress-AIADMK alliance has only helped to bring into focus the fragility of the Union Ministry presided over by P.V. Narasimha Rao.

It must be underscored that the cavalier approach of the Congress leadership has played no insignificant role in the latest turn of events. Its lack of agility in ending faction-fights within the TNCC and mending fences with Jayalalitha will prove to be costly in the long run precisely because of the assistance it is going to render to its principal political adversary—the BJP.

And with the free-for-all infighting likely to surface at the Faridabad AICC session, the future that awaits the Congress and the country at large in the coming days is most uncertain. The truth is that Congressmen in general—from the top leaders to the ordinary workers—are as yet incapable of comprehending the gravity of the challenge the nation faces today.

March 10 *S.C.*

COMMENTARY

Afghan Accord

The ten-point accord on ending hostilities among the warring Afghan groups is apparently a feather in the cap of the Pakistani authorities relying heavily on Islamabad's nimble diplomatic footwork. This agreement, signed by the Afghan President, Burhanuddin Rabbani, the Hizb-e-Islami leader, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, and seven other *mujahideen* leaders who had relentlessly fought Soviet occupation in Afghanistan and the regime of Dr Najibullah following the Soviet pull-out, could indeed become a turning point in the war-ravaged country's contemporary history. However, there are still many imponderables and the prospects of durable peace in that battle-scarred nation, though not as bleak as they were a few days ago, do not appear certain as yet.

Precisely a year ago Dr Najibullah had, under pressure from the UN, declared that he would step down from the post of the Afghan head of state and hand over power, in an orderly fashion, to a 15-member all-party council the world body had promised to set up for bringing about a coalition of all forces as a forerunner to a transitional government. But that announcement triggered a series of developments starting with the ouster of Najib by the Karmalite group in the then ruling Watan party acting in conjunction with the head of the Uzbek militia, General Rashid Dostam, and the charismatic Tajik leader, Ahmed Shah Masood, popularly known as the "Lion of Panjsher". Thereafter it was Engineer Hekmatyar who played the pivotal role in torpedoing every attempt to restore peace and order in Afghanistan.

The three major players on the Afghan chessboard today are Hekmatyar, Masood and Dostam whose Uzbek militia substantially contributed to the building up of effective resistance to Hekmatyar's triumphant march into Kabul. While it is clear that no peace accord without Hekmatyar would work, it is also true that keeping out Masood and Dostam from any peace arrangement would prove to be counter-productive in the final analysis. To that extent the infirmities of the present accord are obvious.

After the UN displayed callous indifference to settling the Afghan problem in step with the US apathy in that regard, Pakistan took the initiative to broker the accord. Islamabad faced a real problem that prompted it to act fast and bring about the agreement through hectic parleys: there was a strong possibility of the revival of the call for Pushtoonistan if Hekmatyar, the indisputable Pushtoon leader after Najib, could not enter Kabul. And the impact of such a call on the NWFP and Pakistan in general was too frightful for the strategists in Islamabad to contemplate. Hence they made every effort to rope in Hekmatyar who has been given the coveted post of Afghan Premier with Islamabad's generous support. The accord's strength also lies in the success in bringing in the Iran-based Shia groups and the fact that it is blessed by both Teheran and Riyadh besides Islamabad.

But its weaknesses cannot be overlooked as well. Dostam is in charge of the northern regions and Masood (who, unlike Hekmatyar, never took comfortable sanctuary in Peshawar) cannot take his replacement as the Defence Minister by a Defence Council represented by every *mujahideen* group too kindly. The burst of gunfire in Kabul following the accord is indicative of the long and weary path the Afghans have still to traverse before they reach the valley of peace in their picturesque country.

Nonetheless, there is no gainsaying that in the short-term Pakistan has won a diplomatic victory of sorts before the annual Islamic Ministers' Conference takes place in Islamabad next month. Some analysts are distressed over the marginalisation of New Delhi in this whole exercise. What needs to be realised is that in any move for peace in the region, India is too important to be ignored. And in the long-term durable peace in Afghanistan has the capacity of unfolding excellent opportunities for closer economic interaction of Kabul with New Delhi regardless of the political course pursued by each in the past.

March 10 *Charvak*

Fighting Religious Fundamentalism

Role of Ideology and Social Policy

C.H. HANUMANTHA RAO

The incidents of Ayodhya on December 6, 1992 have thrown a big cahllenge to the secular and democratic forces. The idea of joint action by the secular and democratic forces has been gaining strength. From all indications available so far, the campaign against religious fundamentalism and against the exploitation of religion for political purposes is to be carried on at the ideological level. People in the country at large are to be explained about the secular foundations of our polity and about the virtues of secularism in a multi-religious society set on the path of development and modernisation.

While all this is necessary, it seems far from adequate to rally the people against religious fundamentalism and for defeating those seeking to exploit religion for political purposes. The events of the last few years do not lend credence to the view that this battle can be fought successfully on the ideological front alone. Such an approach would amount to falling into the trap laid by fundamentalists who would like to fight on their chosen ground where a pandora's box has been opened regarding the future location of the Masjid and Mandir and a host of issues relating to other places of worship.

The resolve by the secular forces of fight it out on the ideological plane represents, at best, a weak response to the formidable challenge posed by the forces of religious fundamentalism. Indeed, there is a total lack of understanding as to why the situation has degenerated to the point where the secular forces find themselves virtually in a defensive position in large parts of the country.

Whether in the pre-independence or the post-independence period, secularism or equal respect for different faiths has never been preached as an abstract ideal, in isolation from other secular issues. Secularism has been inextricably linked with the goals of national independence, economic development, modernisation and social justice. These goals were attractive enough to inspire and enthuse people at large to become active participants in the movement towards realising such objectives. At the same time, the loftiness of these goals brought home the pettiness, meaninglessness and futility of pre-occupation with sectarian and obscurantist issues, and indeed served to wean the people away from those seeking the path of religious fundamentalism. The latter, on the other hand, having a vested interest in *status quo* have always been interested in diverting the people's attention and energies away from the secular issues on the socio-economic plane towards sectarian and obscurantist issues.

This is amply borne out by the history of the freedom movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The goal of national independence became inseparable from the goals of secularism, self-reliance and freedom from socio-economic injustices. In the immediate post-independence period, under a different set of circumstances, Jawaharlal Nehru carried forward this movement with a call for modernisation and development, among other things, by undertaking giant projects which he called temples of modern India. Secularism continued to remain inseperable from the drive for modernisation, development and social justice.

The early post-independence period of expectations gave place to the concern for the equitable sharing of the fruits of development in the seventies. Indira Gandhi charted out a secular path in this new phase by placing the objective of poverty removal at the top on the national agenda. Economic planning became relevant to the common people of the country in this period through the launching of several programmes for the uplift of the deprived and downtrodden sections of our people. The forces of religious fundamentalism could not raise their head because of the powerful backing from the people for the drive towards achieving social justice.

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IT is not accidental that the obscurantist forces started gaining strength after the mid-eighties when the concern for social justice and people-centred development began to be diluted. The package of economic reforms that followed no doubt enthused the upper strata of our society but created serious misgivings among the organised working class and apathy and disillusionment among the unorganised sections constituting the large majority of our population. The severe cuts in public outlays on essential infrastructure, social development and poverty alleviation have only strengthened these misgivings.

(Continued on page 8)

The author is a distinguished economist who worked in various capacities in different official bodies dealing with economic issues.

Development, Democracy, Human Rights

NEELAN THIRUCHELVAM

Within the past few years, the world has witnessed momentous changes. These changes had important consequences for the developing world, for with the collapse of an ideology, there was similar loss of certainty with regard to the efficacy of an alternative development vision. Here, we examine the interrelationship between three of the dominant ideas of this decade: development, democracy and human rights.

(a) Use of development assistance and economic relations between states to promote human rights;
(b) The role of international financial institutions and development agencies and the models of economic developments advocated by these institutions and agencies and their impact on human rights.
(c) The role of civil society and the discourse on development and human rights. These issues would be explored against the backdrop of the ideological and policy changes within South Asia.

The South Asian region is one characterised by extraordinary geographical, political and socio-economic diversity. The problems of maintaining political stability and institution-building are compounded by massive economic and demographic pressures. The region accounts for a mere two per cent of the global income, but needs to support 22 per cent of the global population. Almost half the population of the region is believed to live below the poverty line without basic needs. Despite this diversity and complexity, it remains a region which has the largest population committed to periodic elections, representative institutions, fundamental rights, and democratic freedoms. It is, therefore, a region of considerable importance in terms of constitutional experimentation, institutional reappraisal and renewal. Issues of constitutionalism, human rights and democracy are at the centre of the political and intellectual agenda.

The author, a world renowned jurist and legal luminary, is a noted Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) leader of Sri Lanka. This article is based on a paper he presented at a conference on human rights organised by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg at the end of January 1993.

Nepal has recently enacted a new constitution based on popular sovereignty, a multiparty state, and enforceable fundamental rights.

Bangladesh was engaged in a debate on the form of government—parliamentary or presidential—which they have now resolved in favour of the former. In India the secular foundations of the state and the federal character of the polity have been challenged by revivalist and secessionist movements. Pakistan is also struggling to reconcile the contradictions of a constitutional framework which sought to graft a Westminster style government on to a highly centralised Presidential system, while Sri Lanka is seeking to reconstruct its Bill of Rights in response to persistent complaints of gross and persistent abuse of the human rights of minorities and political dissidents.

Paul Sieghart, the renowned human rights scholar and activist, has stated that one of the most cynical porpositions in politics is that "you cannot make omelettes without breaking eggs". In the field of economic development, it has meant that you cannot create the benefits of growth, without violating at least temporarily the human rights of a substantial number of citizens. This thesis has led to many in South-East Asia arguing that human rights and democracy must be subordinated to the imperatives of development. The newly industrialised countries—which are sometimes described as the four dragons—are cited as inspiring examples of this proposition. But of these countries, two, Singapore and Hong Kong are small city-states,, and it would be difficult to draw broad generalisations from their very particular experiences. This model became further discredited with the collapse of the Marcos regime, and of the military governments in Bangladesh and Pakistan as it became clear that the proposition was often no more than a justification for authoritarianism and for the naked abuse of political power.

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IT was one of the singular achievements of this

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THE Budget, by liberalising imports at this juncture, is thus anti-stabilisation, and inimical to India's interests. It must be emphasised that the idea of improving India's competitiveness through import liberalisation is patently an error. We do *not* improve India's export competitiveness by importing components of micro ovens, colour TV sets, and all manner of kitchen gadgets for the affluent urban householder. The talk of "globalisation" of the Indian economy without educating the people of India, before imparting better skills to all workers, is either uninformed or dictated by international lenders who want to assure 'market access" to their countries' products. We can mprove India's competitiveness only by improving and lowering the costs of infrastructure and key intermediates, by improved efficiency through continuing effort. Take he steel plants. Over the past twenty years, blast furnance productivity, in terms of hot metal output per cubic metre of furnace capacity per day, has improved in Japan from some 1.5 tonnes to 2.5 tonnes. In India, on an average, we have slipped back from more than one tonne to some 0.8 tonne. This has nothing to do with labour; it is a function of managerial efficiency. To some extent the poor quality of indigenous coking coal has been responsible for this situation in the past. But of late, we have been importing significant quantities of coking coal; meanwhile, we have been slipping for diverse other reasons, a principal factor being deteriorating morale.

It is obvious that the policy-makers in India have no understanding of the basic problems affecting industrial efficiency in this country. We are inefficient in the use of energy. Our working capital costs are inordinately high n relation to international standards. The basic problem is *managerial,* and the problem goes back to the very management of the Indian economy.

The 1993-94 Budget has thus adopted the stereotyped textbook formulae applied in developed industrial economies; the Budget has placed emphasis on the globalisation of the Indian economy without preparing he economy to face global competition. Worse, in the background of acute inequalities in the distribution of income, and in the face of acute unemployment, underemployment of labour, the globalisation of the economy, the orientation of all investment patterned on nternational demand and supply, the opening up of the economy to multinationals can only result in the perpetuation of underdevelopment for large sections of he population. For, multinational investments will necessarily be capital intensive, will necessarily be attuned o meeting the demand of only the affluent sections of the population, numbering some 150 million. What is forgotten is that consequent deterioration of the conditions of the rest of the population—more than 700 million— will drag the economy down as a result of increased social tensions. Ayodhya is merely a symptom of this malady.

These are the medium and longer run prospects. The short-term prospects are more stark. The continued imbalance (of the order of $7 billion) in the current account of India's external payment is tantamount to inviting totally avoidable and unnecessary risks for the Indian economy. There is no guarantee that the donors and NRI investors will not again pull the rug from under our feet as they did in the summer of 1991, and that we would not revert to the position we had reached in June 1991. There is a certainty that we would be increasingly bullied by the developed donor countries if we do not see eye to eye with them on political issues, and even on economic and commercial issues. The pressures to sign on the dotted line on the Dunkel Text for GATT reform is symptomatic of the dangers that lie ahead for the country.

The Budget for 1993-94 thus cheats the State Governments in order to attain balance, and puts into doubt the attainment of viability in external payments. The former may lead to a negation of the growth impulse popularly supposed to have been imparted by the 1993-94 Budget. The Budget is thus needlessly, unwarrantedly soft. In the medium term, the country would doubtless have to pay for this soft option in 1993, this desire for cheap popularity. ■

COMMUNICATION

For a New Constitution

When the present Constitution has no effective laws to check the events allowed by it to an extent of damaging the nation's integrity and welfare of people (from communal discrimination in the name of secularism to violent conflicts, looting of the nations's wealth by vested interests to economic disorder, population explosion, poverty and unemployment), why should not a new Constitution be befittingly designed and adopted to save the nation and people from the damage caused by the present Constitution? It is time for all those concerned with the constitutional operation to act in this matter.

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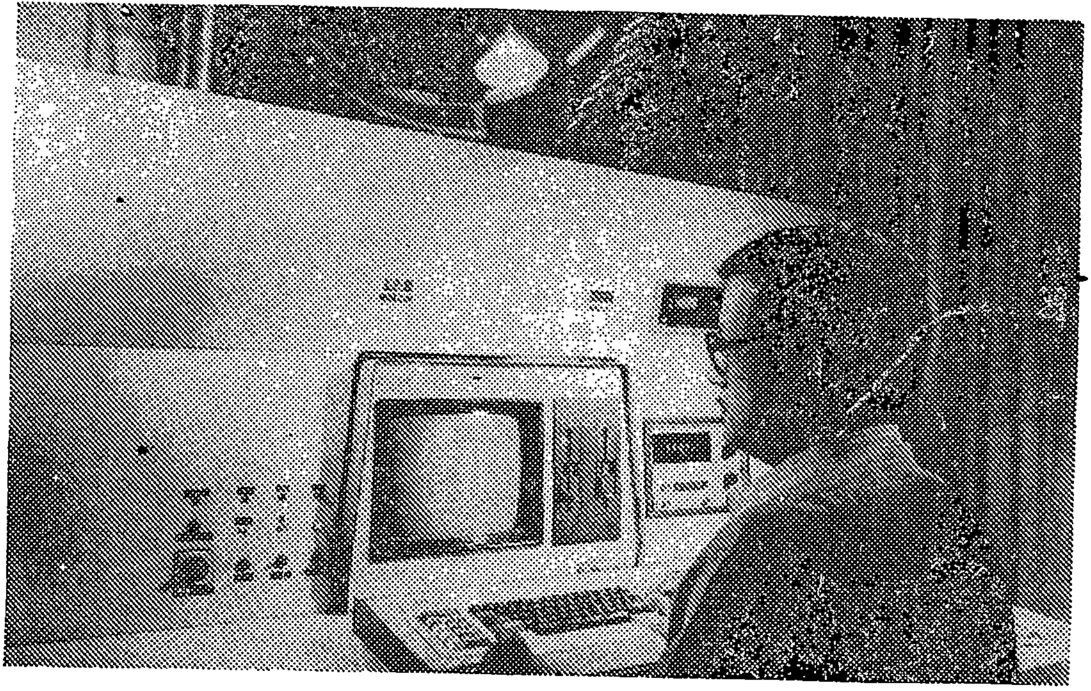

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development decade that it is now widely advocated that upholding human rights is integral to development. This means that respect for individual human rights promotes and does not hinder economic development. This view of the interdependence of human rights and development is embodied in the UN Declaration on the Rights to Development which was adopted by the General Assembly on December 4, 1986.

The core conceptions which inform this Declaration, include (1) recognition that the human person is the central subject of development and should be the active participant and beneficiary of the right to development, (2) acknowledgement that all human rights (civil, political as well as economic, social and cultural rights) are indivisible and interdependent and call for equal attention, and (3) the realisation that the failure to observe civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights constitute obstacles to development.

One of the more important innovations of the UN Declaration is the provision mandating states to remove "obstacles" to development arising from the failure to respect rights and freedoms. This means that the state itself will need to (a) observe and respect the rights and freedoms as embodied in the international human rights covenants and related instruments and (b) address the need to reform state structures, institutions, and policies which are an obstacle to the realisation of these rights. Prof Upendra Baxi has pointed out that obstacles to development can also arise from civil society. The humanity of tribal groups, minorities and disadvantaged social groups is often violated by institutions and practices which operate in civil society.

The violators of rights in these cases are not merely the agents of state power but the holders of social status and of economic power. Prof Baxi adds: "The idea of obstacles to rights, and the summons for their removal, is fascinating in compelling our attention to the hydra-headed monster of human rights violators who reside not just in states but in human collectivities inscribed in the very order that constitutes society."

A question which has become central to the relationship between human rights and development is the issue of political conditionalities. This means that the continuance of development assistance would be dependent on the observance of political conditions such as "good governance" and the observance of civil and political rights.

The European Council in its Development Council Resolution on Human Rights, Democracy and Development of November 28, 1991 has emphasised that respect for human rights, the rule of law and the existence of political institutions which are effective, accountable and enjoy democratic legitimacy are the basis for equitable development.

In this regard, it reaffirmed that safeguarding human rights is an essential part in the relations between the community, its member-states and other countries. The Resolution further pointed out that in the event of grave and persistent human rights violations or the serious interruption of democratic processes, community and member-states will consider appropriate responses. Such responses will include confidential or public "demarches", as well as changes in the content or channels of cooperation or, when necessary, the suspension of cooperation. In addition to human rights, the Council Resolution attaches importance to the issues of good governance. This has been defined to include democratic decision-making, adequate government transparency and financial accountability, respect for the rule of law and the freedom of the press and of expression. The Commission Resolution also attached importance to the question of military spending and emphasised that excessive military expenditure not only results in the diversion of funds from developmental purposes, but is often used for the purposes of internal repression and denial of human rights.

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IN Canada the House of Commons Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade recommended in May 1987 that progress on human rights should be a central element of developmental assistance. It, however, recommended that where gross human rights violation prompt interruption of government to government assistance, alternative ways should be sought to channel such assistance to civil society. It further argued that emergency humanitarian assistance should never be denied.

Developing countries by and large have resisted the link between human rights and aid, on the ground that such conditions infringe on their national sovereignty. They see these intercessions in political terms as efforts to appropriate human rights as an instrument in the political and ideological hegemony of the North over the South. They see attitudes of moral condescension and cultural superiority implicit in many of the pronouncements on the human rights situations in the countries of the South. Human rights groups, on the other hand, have welcomed such initiatives as they believe that they are likely to result in improved compliance with international human rights standards. They also argue that there are no issues of national sovereignty which should serve as a barrier to international concern on human rights and humanitarian issues. They further argue that developing countries, by becoming a signatory to international human rights instruments, voluntarily accept international scrutiny of their domestic human rights records.

Bertram Ramacharan argued in 1990 that sovereignty is abused when it seeks to shield gross violation of human rights or grievous human suffering. Sri Lanka's Civil Rights Movement issued a statement in 1991 that "it is accepted law today that the doctrine of sovereignty of states no longer holds good so far as the state treats the fundamental rights of its subjects. The concept of national sovereignty has in this respect given way to the concept of international responsibility."

But this question of the link between human rights and development threatens to further polarise the international community along North-South lines.

In East Timor in November 1991 Indonesian soldiers fired at a funeral procession killing and injuring dozens of civilians. The Dutch Government had suspended developmental assistance to Indonesia. In response to international protest against the incident, Indonesia appointed an inquiry tribunal. In consequence of the report, the government expressed regret and suspended two senior military officials who were in charge of the soldiers. Many observers mistakenly interpreted the Indonesian response as an acknowledgement of the legitimacy of international human rights concerns. However, within a few weeks the Indonesian Government terminated its aid relationship with the Netherlands which had been one of the more severe critics of the East Timor incident. There was similar retalitory action by Kenya when it severed diplomatic relations with Norway in response to Norwegian criticism of Kenya's treatment of political dissidents. China and India have opposed any attempt to link human rights to aid, trade or multilateral assistance.

If the donor community is to be effective in maintaining this policy there is a need for both credibility and consistency. Credibility is related to the ability of the North to ensure that the South within its national borders guarantees that groups such as refugees, migrant workers and its own under-class, are not subject to discriminatory and arbitrary treatment. There can be no such credibility if there is conspicuous disparity between domestic practices and international policies on human rights questions. The issue of consistency arises when there is selectivity with regard to the countries who are subject to punitive measures. Is the decision to suspend or terminate developmental assistance based solely on human rights considerations or is it more probable that factors such as geo-political importance, the economic model pursued by the recipient country and the domestic politics of the donor country are likely to influence such decisions?

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THE whole question of political conditionalities has also resulted in criticism that developed countries are seeking to impose Western values and institutions on non-Western societies under the guise of promoting good governance and human rights. The result is that the universal character of human rights is now being challenged by many nations is the South. Ms Aung San Suu Kyi recently argued that it is a puzzlement to the Burmese why concepts which recognise the "inherent dignity, equal and inalienable rights of human beings, and which accept that all men are endowed with reason, and conscience, and which recommend the universal spirit of brotherhood can be inimical to indigenous values... It is also difficult for them to understand how any of the rights contained in the 30 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights can be seen as anything but wholesome and good.

If ideas and beliefs are to be denied validity outside the geographical and cultural bounds of their origins, Buddhism would be confined to North India, Christianity to a narrow tract in the Middle East and Islam to Arabia.

Even in the Big League

I won't name the papers. They are in the Big League. But see how many examples of lazy use of the language on just one day:

"Friday's incident in Jogeshwari, when a few people were set alight in their homes, was one of the worst single atrocities that have taken place since December 6."—This is from an editorial. Wonder what the word 'single' is doing in the sentence.

"Arati is among the bright lights of the Marathi West Coast style's younger set: swift, business-like, music's essential poetry well under control."—This from a review by one of our finest music critics. He is such a stylist normally that the sub-editor must have felt induced to follow that cardinal maxim of editing: 'You don't edit an author's style if he is an author and if he has style.'

"Mr. Danial Latifi, noted lawyer, said he was a Muslim and was pained to find the government listening more to riffraffs than to educated and enlightened Muslims."—From a report on Arjun Singh's meeting with some legal luminaries. The word 'riff-raffs', apart from requiring a hyphen, means 'disreputable persons'. Just as we don't say 'rabbles', we don't say 'riff-raffs'.

"Likewise, 40 kg of gobi's price (U.P. variety) has slumped from Rs. 100 to Rs. 45 now... The local variety of ghia's price has remained constant at Rs. 150 (40 kg)."—From a report on the prices of vegetables in Delhi. Makes you wonder if the reporter knows his onions!

H.Y.S.

While cultural relativism cannot serve as a basis for diluting or derogating from universal human rights, standards and obligations, we also need to recognise that the discourse on human rights takes place in an esoteric language and idiom, which is un-intelligible to vast sections of the polity. A conspicuous failure of the human rights movement has been its inability to expand the base of support for secular, democratic and pluralistic values. The social imagination of an entire generation is being captured by the ideologies of ethno-populism, of exclusion and of intolerance.

Therefore, the discourse on human rights and development needs to be enriched by explicit reference to the religious and cultural traditions of South Asia. The rhetoric on basic rights and freedoms is based on statist and individualistic conceptions. The base of support for fundamental rights can be expanded if it is linked to belief systems which have given content and meaning to the social and religious experiences of the people within South Asia. These indigenous, cultural and religious traditions emphasise communitarian conceptions of justice, and conciliatory and consensual approaches to the resolution of conflict.

Obligations of reciprocity within a family facilitate attitudes and values supportive of the rights of the child and the needs of the elderly. Such an approach leads to more effective protection of social rights than what could be available in a legal culture which views these issues exclusively in terms of an individual's claim against the state.

There are other ideas such as *'dharma'* which are central to the Hindu-Buddhist theory of justice and define the moral limits which rulers may not transgress if they are to command the allegiance of their subjects.

In the past few years in South Asia we have witnessed momentous changes which have been beyond our most optimistic expectations. These were moments of triumph in the struggle for democracy and human rights. These moments have given rise to tense faith and optimism in the normative power of constitutions to create multiparty systems, establish competitive electoral processes, catalyse civil society institutions, and guarantee justiciable human rights. On the other hand, we also had our moments of tragedy, of anguish and of despair. One such tragedy relates to recent incidents in Ayodhya, and the consequent violence, bigotry and intolerance which have beleaguered the subcontinent. Neither the discourse on human rights nor on development, has been adequately responsive to the forces of ethnicity and of nationalism which challenge the foundations of a secular-democratic polity. Such development leads to disillusionment and cynicism towards the appalling disparity between constitutional ideals, and the reality of gross and persistent violations of human rights.

It was Ms Aung San Suu Kyi who reminded us that in the struggle for development and human rights it should be our common endeavour to prove that the spirit of man can transcend the flaws of human nature. ■

(Courtesy: *The Hindu*)

Human Rights Debate on Broader Canvas

K.G. KANNABIRAN

This article, by the distinguished civil liberties and human rights leader, was written before the release on February 21 of the kidnapped Andhra Pradesh MLA, P. Balaraju, held hostage by the People's War Group (PWG) organisation of the Naxalites, and the subsequent release on bail of Kranti Ranadev. However, considering its significance in view of the issues it raises it is being reproduced from Newstime *with due acknowledgement for the benefit of our readers.*

--Editor

> The government will not re-establish respect for law without giving the law some claim to respect. It cannot do that if it neglects one feature that distinguishes law from ordered brutality. If the Government does not take rights seriously, then it does not take law seriously either.
>
> —Ronald Dworkin

It was yet another kidnap. This time it was Balaraju, MLA, and a tribal, Srinivasulu, IAS, a project officer and four other employees of the Girijan Cooperative Corporation. Used to constitutional categories, many of us were surprised at the behaviour of the People's War Group (PWG) of Andhra Pradesh. Many people felt aggrieved that the principle of reservation was not extended to kidnap and abduction.

For the politics of the PWG these constitutional categories are irrelevant. But the tribal in and around Koyyuru felt that Balaraju is a good tribal leader as he was consistently working for the upliftment of the tribal, taking pains to see that the legislation for preventing exploitation of the tribal by the plains people is implemented. This has been the subject matter of several reports on the tribal and this state of affairs has been the cause for repeated revolts by the tribal.

Interestingly Koyyuru and the area around was the region where Alluri Seetharamaraju organised the Pithuri revolt against the British. While he was bathing in a tank in Mampa, a village few kilometers away from Koyyuru, he was arrested, brought to Rajendra Palem, a hamlet of Koyyuru, tied to a tree and shot. Encounters are a very colonial tradition. The officer who performed this gallant act was Major Goodal. From there his body was carried to KD Peta a few kilometers down the road to Narsipatnam from Koyyuru town where he was cremated by the British.

Our police follow this tradition scrupulously. By all accounts it was Arjun Rao, IAS, while serving in various capacities in the area, initiated steps to erect memorials at the places where Sitharamaraju was caught, shot and cremated. Born in July 1897 he died on the 11th of May 1924; and he was hardly 27 years when he was killed, that being the average longevity of revolutionaries including Naxalities.

It is also a coincidence that the same Arjun Rao is deputed by the government to deal with the issue of kidnap of Balaraju and others. Fortyfive years after Seetharamaraju, the Srikakulam movement commenced and despite systematic physical liquidation of these Naxalites the movement is continuing even today. Nearly seventy years after Seetharamaraju in the areas he organised revolt one finds the same deprivation, the same poverty, and the tribal underfed and underclothed living in these areas.

◆

THE practice of taking as hostages of persons unconnected with the specific issue between the government and the PWG is a practice we in APCLC never approved of. We have been as human rights activists against this type of political practice. Whether the police hold people in illegal custody or the Naxalites kidnap and take as hostages persons unconnected with the specific issue involved, our stand has been the same. We do not see any difference between a kidnap and an illegal custody by the police, excepting that in the case of the latter there is no public outcry because the people involved have always been the poor and the disinherited.

We are of the view that the government's utter disregard for the constitutional value system and its failure to perform its fundamental obligations have been largely responsible for the spread of the Naxalite, the Dalit and the anti-liquor movements in the State. The last being the latest demonstrates the utter disregard of the constitutional obligations. When there is a powerful and widespread movement against distribution and sale of liquor, and for the enforcement of the Directive, namely, prohibition, the government, in cynical disregard for the popular upsurge, have granted licenses for the setting up of breweries and distilleries. Goebbels, the notorious Nazi propagandist, said the "state must have the courage to break its own laws". The Indian state, both at the Centre and the State level, has appropriated this dictum and has been dealing with various movements quite ruthlessly.

It is in view of our understanding of the character of the state and its capacity to inflict large-scale violence in the process of securing the release of the MLA and five others we felt that some sort of an intervention as human rights activists was necessary. The repeated phone calls from Dronamaraju, the Member of Parliament, and his other colleagues and the friends and well-wishers of Balaraju and the kidnapped officials of the establishments set up for girijan welfare, pushed Prof Haragopal and me to the decision we have taken to intervene to ensure, if possible, that no human rights violation takes place while tackling the issue of release. But without the support of the government effective intervention is not possible and our efforts will be confined to expression of solidarity with the people who have organised a protest in the form of 'dharna'.

This difficulty was resolved by Dayachari, IAS, approaching us with a request to intervene. There was a sense of urgency in the request made by him and so on the fourth we both proceeded to Narsipatnam. Arjun Rao, the special officer authorised to negotiate for the release of the hostages, was already there in the guest house at Narsipatnam. We had discussions with Arjun Rao and the other leaders namely Dronamraju, Ramakrishna, and other employee representatives. We also met Ms Radha, wife of Balaraju, MLA. We thereafter proceeded to Koyyuru in the company of the Collector, Visakhapatnam, Pradeep Chandra. The GCC officers at Koyyuru were very helpful. One of their officers, Chinnamraju, a tribal, is one among the six kidnapped.

On the seventh we were able to meet the leaders of the PWG squad. As a result of the discussions they gave up the demand for the release of Ramanna who is lodged in the prison at Secunderabad. But they were very keen on securing the release of Kranti Ranadev, who was in Warangal jail. Both Ramanna and Ranadev

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have stated that they would like to opt out from the movement and lead normal lives.

While they didn't press for the release of Ramanna as one of the conditions for the release of hostages, they strongly suspected that the statement by Ranadev was under duress. They made it clear to us that they will not compel Ranadev to join them. They agreed that this should be verified by an independent person and we thought of Kaloji, a person whose credibility can never be questioned. We thought that the agony of waiting for the release of the kidnapped persons would end soon if the earlier statement attributed to Ranadev was confirmed.

But that was not to be and further contact became impossible on account of deployment of forces after the meeting and complaints came from the tribals that they were subjected to violent treatment. Haragopal left for Hyderabad around the eighth and Dr Balagopal, who had come to Vizag, joined me. The Vizag unit members, Akbar (President) and Krishna, were throughout with us at Koyyuru. On the eleventh four out of the six hostages were set free at some place near KD Peta. We appealed for the release of the remaining two and the stalemate continues.

The government had earlier agreed in principle to secure bail and release Ranadev to join his comrades if the hostages are released. To lend strength to this assurance they took steps to secure bails in the cases pending in Warangal and Khammam. These were ordered by the courts on condition of sureties executing bonds for various sums totalling a lakh and odd rupees. The cases in Maharashtra remain unattended.

This was the stage when the four hostages were set free. In the letter addressed to Arjun Rao and sent alongwith the hostages who were released, they reiterated their earlier demand, namely, that Ranadev should be brought to Narsipatnam. Arjun Rao and I felt that the Vizag prison would be better and accordingly suggested shifting Ranadev to the Vizag central prison. Is the end in sight? Should the Naxalites insist on release of Ranadev as a condition precedent for the release of Balaraju and Chinnamraju?

We always held the view that kidnap as a political practice is counter-productive and at some stage may alienate and produce resentment among the people for whose cause they have been waging an unremitting struggle, undergoing severe privations and at great risk to their lives in that process. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the East European governments inform us that any future society can never be egalitarian if human rights are not respected. No such society can be egalitarian if in the process of attainment concern for human rights is ignored.

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THIS is the second time we are intervening. Earlier it was at Gurthedu. When senior IAS officers were kidnapped on December 27, 1987. Then it was Yugandhar, the then Secretary for Industries, who contacted me and the ruling party in the State was the Telugu Desam. The ruling party at the Centre was the Congress-I. Fear of dismissal led the State Government to take speedy action. The terms for securing the release were finalised at Hyderabad itself. The release of the seven prisoners on bail was secured with lightning speed.

There has been since then a steady degeneration in governance, in the content of politics, even in the response from the public to atrocities and injustices. All of us have been reduced to the position of spectators afraid even to take positions. Our responses are very often moulded by our prejudices and our own politics and the habit of thought such politics inculcate in us. In a crisis-ridden society, such as ours the government alone is not in crisis, all of us also are. That is why I think we are in sixes and sevens on such important issues as violence on Dalits and reservations, the necessity of a secular polity if social transformation is to take place at all, and the necessity for promoting a human rights tradition to ensure realisation of these.

For the human rights activists Koyyuru and earlier Gurthedu raise issues regarding the concept of human rights itself; the advisability of expanding the concept and thereby enlarging the field of operation; its relations with radical and democratic movements; has it any transforming role while operating the institutions available within a democratic set up; should it merely confine itself to maintaining a crime audit of the state. All such and other related questions need to be debated.

But the debate should be on broader canvas and against the back drop of the recent decision of the Central Government to set up a National Human Rights Commission at the Centre and the State Commission of Human Rights at the State level. The repertoire of powerful semantic tools already in use, namely, 'law and order', 'public order', 'terrorist activity' and 'terrorist' appear to be inadequate for 'atrocities management'. They need an adjudicatory body, to provide justification for, and confer validity to the way atrocities are being managed by the state. ■

(Courtesy: *Newstime*)

UNION BUDGET

Budget and the Nation

V.S. MAHAJAN

One can hardly find another recent budget which has come out with so many fiscal concessions. Practically every industry from consumer to capital goods has been provided with one concession or another. Imports have been further liberalised and irksome regulations hindering the free flow of imports are likely to be done away with soon. However, unless good care is taken to ensure that only essential items, not produced or available within the country, are imported, such liberalised import policy can bounce back. There is also the danger that it might hamper domestic production, particularly of import competitive items, where now with easy access consumers would opt for imported goods. Of course, if this step leads to improvement in the quality of domestic products, which is generally the aim behind liberalised imports, then it would be a positive gain. In any case before going in for such a policy it would have been advisable to go by the experience already available from the current policy. That could have provided a useful guideline. Obviously the Finance Minister being under pressure to push up the agenda of structural reforms did not have enough time to do so. Thus the present step appears to be rather hasty.

Insofar as the wide sweep of concessions given in the excise duty on domestic products is concerned, their impact would only be known after sometime. However, under the existing recessionary market conditions, particularly for consumer durables, this is the right step. But then we find here a limited domestic market, mostly of middle-income consumers who generally patronise these goods. They are already hard-pressed under the current cost of living and hardly have surplus funds to finance these durables. Further, while under the Budget, as mentioned above, a wide range of concessions have been thrown to an entire list of commodities, the income of fixed income groups is going to be taxed the same way as last year notwithstanding the fall in the value of real income meanwhile. Thus this class has been badly affected by the Budget and therefore it would be ideal to talk of the emergence of an encouraging consumer market after concessions; unless of course, we would tap exports. However, the experience on that score has not given much cause for cheer.

In the Budget some crumbs have been thrown at the common man by way of primarily cheap matches, tea, coffee, dalda. But then he will have to swallow tea without sugar where the price rise has been beyond his reach. It is a cruel joke played on these helpless people, especially those below the poverty line, who are not only facing mounting unemployment, but equally find it hard to live on their meagre earnings which are quite insufficient to pay for their daily necessities.

We are often reminded that the inflation rate has declined substantially. But has it been to the benefit of the common man? Also when yesterday's prices have already been quite high, what difference would it make if today's rise is little lower? Food subsidies provided a major relief to the common man. These are gradually on the way out to make room for the market economy. No doubt the market economy is efficient for yielding optimal results. But at the same time the market economy can function only when we have the appropriate climate. In a country like India with several constraints, particularly in the area of infrastructure, we are certainly not in a position to operate a meaningful result-yielding market economy. Here our first basic task should be to ensure that the common man has the minimum income to enable him to lead a purposeful life. We are certainly far, far from it. As a matter of fact our recent structural reform policies, where the main emphasis has been on promoting large and medium industrial units, have added more to unemployment and the latter has been further accelerated with the programme of gradual disinvestment in the public sector.

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IT is well recognised, and time and again repeated in the current *Economic Survey*, that

Dr Mahajan is the Director, Centre for India Development Studies, Chandigarh.

the basic malaise that the economy suffers from is low productivity in practically all sectors of the economy. Undoubtedly with little care, sincere involvement by our leaders, appropriate training of our human resources and better management of the economy we could obtain far better results from the current resources. This fact has also been emphasised by the foreign missions that have visited the country. There is lack of work culture. A high degree of redtapism and inefficiency is found in most areas. And yet our thrust is to encourage further investment without caring how efficient the earlier investment has been.

This is very appropriately demonstrated by our recent Railway Budget where perhaps for the first time the thrust has been to soak maximally the travelling public as well as consumers by the levy of hefty charges in the name of modernisation of the Railways. How inefficiently the Railways function, that there exists high pilferage and mismanagement of rail equipment, stores and other property, is too obvious. Besides high degree of redtapism, fleecing the helpless travellers while seeking reservation on trains on valid tickets, deteriorating services, overcrowding in trains, are well known. Here also with a little imagination, interest by the high-ups in the day-to-day rail management, incentives and rewards for the efficient members of both operational and office staff, careful checking of ticketless travellers and like measures could yield as much revenue as the Railway Minister now proposes to collect from the public much to their discomfiture. This, in other words, amounts to saying that the people are being penalised for the inefficiency of the Railways.

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Thus it is very essential that far more attention is paid to the human aspect, its appropriate training, its work culture, its rewards for efficiency and punishment for inefficiency, which would go a long way in raising efficiency and productivity in the country as well as save it from unwanted expenditure. The Japanese Mission that had visited India sometime back had clearly pointed out in their report that India had yet a long way to go to create a work environment comparable to the Western countries. This shows that growth cannot take place merely by heavy investment or importing latest plant and equipment or wooing foreign investors. It has basically to emerge from within by improving our human resources, making them productivity conscious, encouraging them to compete with their foreign counterparts (especially the Japanese), rewarding them for developing new processes and techniques of production. Certainly a lot can be achieved by utilising efficiently our own resources rather than going in a big way for international loans, which are generally unproductively utilised and thus add heavily to the country's indebtedness. Unfortunately, we are already under heavy international debt raised recently in the name of structural reforms and are now further seeking major help for globalisation of the economy. There is an old saying: cut your coat according to the cloth available. We must try to tailor our economy according to our limited means and, as mentioned earlier, pay far more attention towards human efficiency and productivity.

It is also in this way that we would be able to achieve meaningful results in our export performance where the experience shows that even after providing heavy concessions to the exclusive export units, our balance of payments situation continues to grow worse. This is a clear indication of the fact that most of our exports are not competitive in the global market. They suffer from quality as well. Thus our foremost attention should be to improve quality and productivity of the existing units rather than drain our resources by setting up more and more new units. ■

In Service of Neo-Imperialism

D.M. DIWAKAR

The Central Budget in India reflects the essential thrust of the economic policies of this country. This is because in India the decision-making process is highly centralised. In the context of fiscal policy, we find that the Budget of 1991-92 marked a point of qualitative departure from that of 1990-91 and earlier budgets. In the earlier budgets economic development, expansion of employment opportunities, poverty alleviation, social justice, etc. were the major points which were taken into consideration. But the main thrust of the Budget of 1991-92 (which was virtually dictated by the IMF and the World Bank) was essentially to facilitate imports and reduce fiscal and budgetary deficits, which implied reduction in government expenditure including cut in subsidies. This trend continued with more vigour in the Budget of 1992-93.

The result was that the Balance of Payments (BoP) crisis, which has caused loss of India's economic sovereignty to the IMF and the World Bank in 1991, could not be contained. Foreign indebtedness increased and concomitant debt-servicing also went up. While there was a few per cent increase in exports, the increase in imports was so high that the foreign trade deficit by the end of this year has more than doubled. Foreign trade deficit in 1991-92 was Rs 3809 crores and the deficit for April-December 1992-93 happens to be Rs 10,151 crores. All these led to further aggravation of the BoP crisis and increase in foreign indebtedness which today is of the order of about Rs 3,95,856 crores.

It is also worth noting that the industrial development of India has been receiving its main impetus from government expenditure. This has been the legacy of the Second World War. Therefore, when there was a decline in the rate of growth of government expenditure on account of reduction of budgetary deficit, the income of the top 20 per cent Indian households (including contractors, brokers, etc.) who were the main consumers of goods of comforts and luxuries, suffered a setback and ushered in an era of industrial recession. Employment in organised sector stagnated. So the basic malady of our labour surplus economy which is reflected in growing joblessness, concomitant lumpenisation and criminalisation of the Indian society, continued unabated. This trend was more pronounced in 1992-93.

The preoccupation of the present Budget, therefore, has not been to address itself to the issues of social justice, development and employment which have remained neglected since the Budget of 1991-92, but to arrest the industrial recession and at the same time to continue with the policy of liberalisation of imports and reducing the fiscal and budgetary deficits. One cannot deny the positive effect of the earlier Budget in reducing the rate of inflation which is being applauded by the urban middle class but this has been achieved at the cost of reduced budgetary deficit causing industrial recession and increasing joblessness which threatens to destroy the basic social fabric of this country.

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THE present Budget, as presented on February 27, 1993, therefore, follows the dictates of the IMF and the World Bank in terms of reduction in customs duties (even when only recently on February 9, 1993 there was substantial reduction in import duties) and limiting the budgetary deficit to 4.5 per cent of the GDP. At the same time to contain industrial recession, interest rates have been reduced by one per cent, banks statutory liquidity reserve (SLR) has been reduced from 36 per cent to 25 per cent, and there has been reduction in excise duties particularly in those areas where industrial recession is well-pronounced. For example, excise duties on air conditioners were reduced to a range between Rs 7000 and Rs 75,000 from the present range of Rs 13,800 to Rs 85, 000 depending on the size of unit; on referigerators ranging from Rs 575 to Rs 5750 to Rs 400 to Rs 3500; on cosmetics and toiletries reduced from 120 per cent to 70 per cent; on electric fans and tooth powders reduced

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from 17.25 per cent to 10 per cent, specified domestic electrical appliances, three wheelers and non-petrol driven commercial vehicles from 23 per cent to 15 per cent; on radio sets from 23 per cent to 10 per cent, plastic moulded luggage from 34.5 per cent to 25 per cent; on mattresses and bedding articles of cellular rubber from 69 per cent to 30 per cent; on chessis of some commercial vehicles will also stand reduced to 15 per cent; body building on chessis of buses and similar passanger vehicles are fully exempted; on motor cars from 55 per cent to 40 per cent.

Specific excise duty on colour television sets presently varying from Rs 1925 to Rs 4785 per set has been reduced to rates ranging from Rs 1250 to Rs 2200 per set. Excise duty on plywood and printing paper has been reduced from 34.5 per cent to 20 per cent. Relief has also been provided to the matches industry and on acrylic staple fibre. Vanaspati has been given excise duty relief of Rs 400 per tonne. Among the edible items whose duties have been reduced are noodles and toasted cereals from 17.25 per cent to 10 per cent, and biscuits from 11.5 per cent to 7.5 per cent. Coffee and tea have been exempted fully from excise duty. Excise duty on polyster filament yarns has been reduced from Rs 80.6 per kilogram to Rs 69 per kilogram and for nylon filament yarn it has been reduced from Rs 75.8 to Rs 57.5 per kilogram. Even then considering the present level of industrial recession, these measures appear to be inadequate to overcome the depression caused by the low rate of expansion of government expenditure. Though the budget presentation skillfully tried to show that there will be increase in government expenditure by providing 32 per cent increase in the Central Plan, what remains concealed is that the transfer from the Central kitty to the States will decline in real terms. Thus, the rate of increase of government expenditure is likely to decline further aggravating the recessionary forces. The constancy of Central capital expenditure this year and the next year will also work in the same direction. Therefore, what appears to be gained by reduction in interest rate and excise on the recessionary industrial front, is likely to be neutralised on account of the declining rate of growth of government expenditure, including the government capital expenditure. Pre-Budget increase in coal prices, railway freight hike of the order of 10 to 12 per cent and hundred per cent convertability of the rupee which is likely to increase the petroleum and fertiliser prices, are expected to contribute towards industrial recession rather than providing fillip to industrial revival.

Therefore, there is no likelihood of any let-up in industrial recession in 1993-94 as well. So the country will go deeper into the quagmire of non-developmental syndrome in terms of increasing joblessness and concomitant lumpenisation and criminalisation of the society. Moreover, the pre-Budget reduction in import duty in the Budget will further aggravate the adverse balance of foreign trade situation and add to the foreign debt. Hence it would not be out of place to conclude that this Budget has remained an exercise in futility so far as national interest is concerned. And, on the other hand, it surrenders completely to the neo-imperialist machinations. What to talk of development or growth even the limited objective of arresting the industrial recession is not likely to be achieved by the current Budget proposlas. What a complete mess! ■

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UNION BUDGET

Back to Foreign Domination

N. BHATTACHARYYA

The Congress-I has taken the country back to the pre-independence days. With the 1993-94 Central Budget it has given the country on permanent lease to the neo-imperialist powers. They are allowed to dump goods in the Indian market of 850 million people and take away raw materials and agricultural products at throwaway prices. There is no need to discuss the Dunkel Report or the Intellectual Property Rights issue any longer in this country.

It is argued in the media that due to exposure to competition the efficiency of the industry will improve and consumers will be benefited. Even a schoolchild knows the nature of competition and resultant 'improvement' of many Latin American countries where Reaganomics and Thatcherism were introduced in the seventies! In the USA where such policies were advocated those policies are now being reversed by President Clinton, but our leaders of both the Congress-I and the BJP are bent upon creating chaos in this country. Both these parties have the same economic perspective and they are competing to keep the MNCs in good humour.

The Finance Minister tells the people that there was no massive retrenchment last year and the 'prophets of doom' were proved wrong. But he fails to explain why both the BJP and the Congress-I had to join hands and create a sense of insecurity among millions of the minority community, the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and people of backward classes. The *rath yatra* by L.K. Advani culminated in the massive demolition and communal massacares in December 1992 and January 1993 in different parts of the country. These happenings clearly proved to the world leaders that even the organised trade union movement in the country is virtually dead and the seven or ten developed countries can safely invest in India. They have included India in their exclusive club called MIGA (Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency).

Rajiv Gandhi gave the lead in 1985-86 on how to delink 90 per cent of the population from the top 10 per cent who have amassed the bulk of the wealth of our economic growth. For these 85 million people there is a mad rush for industrialisation and growth. Industrial growth during this period was around eight per cent but it produced only consumer durables and elite consumption goods. In 1990 Germany has 79.5 million people and in India this elite class is more in number. The result of such suicidal policies are clearly exposed in the following table.

The author teaches Economics in Motilal Nehru College, University of Delhi.

Balance of Payments and External Debt

	1980-81	*1985-86*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
1. Exports as p.c. of GDP	4.8	4.4	6.2	7.3
2. Imports as p.c. of GDP	9.2	8.1	8.9	8.6
3. Current as p.c. of GDP	-1.2	-2.3	-2.6	-1.1
4. Year and external debt in US $ Billion	23.5	37.35	63.4	71.11 (Sept'92)
5. Debt service as p.c. of current receipts	9.3	16.7	24.7	24.6

(Economic Surveys)

Since Narasimha Rao took over power he compelled the country to go for more and more loans and the day is not far off when we would have to use about 30 per cent of our earnings of foreign exchange to repay only our old commited loans. Therefore, one can understand why the Finance Minister of this country is asking everyone to export and bring foreign exchange. He devalued the Indian currency twice in 1991 by around 20 per cent and in this Budget he has allowed free convertibility of the rupee. In 1991 after devaluation the dollar price was fixed at Rs 26.3 and now the price is around Rs 33. Let us hope the doller price remains at this level!

To help rich farmers with imported fertilisers and the users of modern automobiles with POL the country spends around 33 to 35 per cent of its export earnings. Thus to repay our external loan and to meet this import bill we require around 55 to 60 per cent of our export earnings.

And now after free convertibility this foreign exchange has to be purchased in the open market. Where will the dollar price go?

The supporters of our economic reforms need to note that China is in utter crisis with regard to the value of their own currency. The *Beijing Youth Daily* reported that for six weeks up to mid-February people were in a mad rush to convert their currency to either gold ornaments or the dollar. It goes without saying that in the light of such an experience India should be cautious on this front.

In order to help the foreigners dump their goods in the Indian market, the government has given tax concessions worth Rs 4522 crores in customs and excise duties. Our corporate sector pays around Rs 10,000 crores as corporation tax and the government has refunded to them about 45 per cent of this money by this concession. The threat that this must be passed on to the consumers is thus understood by our businessmen! Moreover, our learned Finance Secretary is rewarded for his loyalty to the World Bank and he is shortly joining this organisation. Not only have they reduced the excise and customs duties, they have seen to it that there are enough foreign and private sector banks to create liquidity in the economy. SLR and CRR will be reduced to 25 per cent and coupled with one per cent reduction in lending rates, these foreign goods will have a roaring market among 10 per cent of the elite population. In such a situation it is not difficult to visualise the state of the price situation in the country. The following table shows the relationship between the Fiscal deficit and the rate of inflation during the last decade.

Fiscal Deficit and Rate of Inflation

	Fiscal Deficit as per cent of GDP	*Rate of inflation (WPI)*
1985-86	8.3	4.8
1988-89	7.8	5.7
1990-91	8.4	12.1
1992-93	5.0	6.8

(Economic Surveys)

Thus when we have opted for consumerism in the most naked form, we should be prepared for another dose of inflation. Before the Budget train fares and freight, coal, steel, sugar and cereal prices have been jacked up, and still we are assured that the prices of other commodities will not go up in sympathy!

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OUR ordinary people are quite used to the gimmicks of the Congress-I Government since independence. The Finance Minister claims an increase of 32 per cent in the Central Plan outlay. But if we take the revised Plan provision the real increase will be only 28.5 per cent. However, the budgetory provision for capital expenditures, both Plan and non-Plan, has remained around Rs 29,000 crores during the last three years. With the budgetory support transferred to agriculture, rural development and social services, core sectors like transport, telecommunications and energy, etc. will have to fend for themselves. Despite the absolute increase in outlay, the allocation to agriculture has remained at the 1991-92 level, that is, 3.8 per cent of the total outlay. During the last two years due to paucity of funds the sale of tractors and pumpsets went down. It is hoped that these two industries will appropriate the major expenses on agricultural and rural development. Moreover, an old and sick organisation NABARD has been directed to help the dead village institutions supposed to provide rural credit, etc. Two-thirds of our people live in the rural areas and last year when the industries failed the country, it was only good monsoon and agricultural production that helped the country to surmount the crisis. Even so it is ironical that the entire emphasis of the Congress-I Government is to promote foreign industry and trade. The Finance Minister agrees that after agriculture, it is textiles which provides maximum job to our people. Only a fortnight back the Prime Minister promised that the handloom industry would be given its due support so that our weavers don't die of starvation. And his Finance Minister in this Budget has given all support to the synthetic fibre textile industry which will force our weavers in the handloom sector to starve and join the long que of landless agricultural labourers.

Our learned Finance Minister remembers Lenin when it comes to 'electricfication' but does not believe in the 'Soviets' in a federal country. He knows well that due to his wrong budget policies in the past the States were starved of small savings. In this Budget he refused to add any extra tax; but due to concessions in excise duties the States will be losing around Rs 541 crores. The Finance Commission should find out how long the States have to depend on the whims and caprices of the Centre. The American President has shown tremendous statesmanship by imposing additional direct taxes on the top 1.2 per cent of the population to reduce the budget deficit. We don't know when India will behave as a mature independent country.

Our government gave an undertaking to the World Bank that India will contain deficit financing. In 1992-93 the Budget provided for a budgetory deficit of Rs 5389 crores but ended up with a budgetory deficit of Rs 7202 crores. The provision for next year is Rs 4314 crores. However, the fiscal deficit has remained around Rs 36,000 crores since 1991-92. On the other hand, the revenue deficit has increased from Rs 16,261 crores in 1991-92 to Rs 16,700 crores in 1992-93 but in next year it is estimated to go up to Rs 17,630 crores. During the last two years the sale proceeds of the shares of the PSEs was taken in the revenue receipts; otherwise the revenue deficits could increase by around Rs 3000 crores. In this connection one may remind our policy-makers that the public sector is not the devil as has been protrayed in our report to the World Bank. R. Nagraj in his study (*Economic and Political Weekly,* January 16-32, 1992, pp. 105-108) has clearly brought out that our overwhelming emphasis on diluting public ownership is not based on their performance since 1960-61. Moreover, we cannot at once corner all the sale proceeds of the shares of the PSEs and deny these organisations the required capital. On the other hand, the interest burden as a percentage of non-Plan expenditure went up from 27 per cent in the Seventh Plan to 42 per cent in 1993-94. There is no effort to contain our increasing obsession to contract loans.

This year the Bombay Stock Exchange refused to show the same excitement as they showed last year. Last year the stock exchange scam clearly exposed that the central bank of the country was absolutely inefficent to prevent such a mega scandal. This year there is a proposal to have a supervisory body for the banks. What purpose will it serve unless the people directly involved in the scam are not punished by the government? We hope the JPC will be able to book the criminals involved in the scam.

The Finance Minister claims that bad and doubtful debts of our banks come to around Rs 10,000 crores. Plus they have to increase their capital as per international norms. It is claimed that Rs 10,767 crores of bank credit is locked in the sick units. Thus due to wilful wrong management of our banking industry the country has lost around 21,000 crores and the loss due to the shares' scam should be included in it. The Congress-I politicians cannot wish away their guilt. They are mainly responsible for the bankruptcy of this country.

Since the Narasimha Rao Government took office the rich, both Indian and foreign, are very happy that they can do whatever they like with the vast resources and manpower of this country. The minorities and weaker sections of our country are feeling insecure about their livelihood, hearths and homes. The people who are living below the poverty line in the villages and in urban slums have no hopes of survival in this monetised economy. The entire programme of economic restructuring will turn them once more into the cheapest bonded labourers. We don't know if there is any political will in this country to provide them minimum social justice as stipulated in the Constitution of this country. ■

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Indian Economy: A Historic Step Forward

ANIL RAJIMWALE

India is going through historic economic changes. Rarely in history, structural shifts of such immense proportions have been brought about in such a short time and so smoothly. By allowing the rupee to float and making it convertible in transactions on trade account India has taken a giant step towards integration with the world market.

The change reflects the enhanced role of the market and market forces vis-a-vis the state. Alongwith steep cuts in customs duties, reduction in excise duty, interest relief to exporters, and other related steps, the measures constitute a steady trend of structural socio-economic changes of far-reaching consequences. The Indian experiment is proving to be an example.

There has been constant criticism of the last two government budgets, from both the Right and the Left; there have even been misgivings and criticisms within the ruling party itself. They have been forecasting all kinds of disasters, even sell-out to the West and the IMF-WB. Of course, many of the apprehensions were well-grounded and these indeed were, and are, several anti-people aspects of the economic course undertaken and the Budget.

But most of the criticisms and apprehensions since the beginning of the structural reforms have not been borne out by the subsequent events and results. The inflation rate has come down to around seven per cent: a notable achievement; it has been kept within safe limits for quite long. Among others, it reflects an increase in commodity supply and movement and a certain grip over the money supply. The correspondence of money and commodity movements is one of the crucial achievements. The critics have been silent and are not mentioning the fall in the inflation rate, not to mention the failure to analyse it *at all*.

There has been a visible increase in the role of the market and market forces, mainly through privatisation. Though it has no doubt set off some unhealthy trends, it has on the whole enhanced the vitality of the economy helping entrepreneurship and capitalisation. This is important particularly in the conditions when the role of the middle classes and small proprietors has increased, and service and information sectors have acquired greater importance.

No budget in the last two decades gave such tax reliefs, and the rate of price-rise has been among the lowest in these decades. There have been no maddening price-rises, as also no serious countrywide mass movements and upheavals from those vociferously attacking the new policy as anti-people. The public sector continues its gradual and necessary withdrawal from the commanding heights, and it is a welcome development in the Indian scene that ideological-political considerations have had to beat a retreat in the face of sheer new economic necessities. Economics has taken precedence over politics.

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THE predictions about surrender to the West have also been proved wrong. One can, of course, cite several instances where collaborations or agreements with foreign firms and governments could have been reached differently or could have even been avoided. But that does not constitute the general picture. There has been a big overall change in the realistic direction in foreign investments taking the world climate into consideration. Flow of capital into the country and out has increased not only quantitatively but also qualitatively. *India has begun joining the new technological revolution* this way. It has begun joining the community of growing economies which are getting interconnected. The relationships between Indian and foreign proprietors is becoming closer and India is gaining access to large areas of the world market including Western and Eastern Europe. Not only has the arrival of foreign business been facilitated, the Indian economy and producers too are getting more favourable and stronger footholds in the world market.

Consequently, India's banking, financial and communication/information systems are undergoing a sea-change and structural shifts.

This is *in keeping with* the increasing pace of world money-commodity market. There is no doubt that in the last two years, the country's communication system has spread as never before and is endeavouring to catch-up with the world levels. Close collaboration with foreign firms in the fields of *infotech* is a major positive and necessary step dictated by the very mechanics of the rapidly growing economies *and in particular by its increasing pace.* In today's world rapid speeds, less time and less space are key factors.

The present Budget has raised the rupee nearer to other world currencies and will no doubt allow the ripples of growth to be tansmitted to the Indian economy through the floating rupee. It is *among the spectacular achievements* of the post-independence India. The state has withdrawn from the foreign exchange regulation to a considerable extent and has thus irreversibly connected our economy with the world economy. The process of globalisation has at last taken a decisive step as far as India is concerned.

Extension of convertibility of the rupee from trade account to all other areas of current account is inevitable. Consequently, and equally, inevitable is the conversion of the rupee into an international currency. The necessity of this conversion was particularly emphasised by the recently concluded Indo-Russian agreement on rupee-rouble relationship, at the time of the Yeltsin visit. It became clear that it was the last agreement with the shades and relics of the Cold War era on it, as also that both the sides wanted to shed the old *forms* of friendship and economic relationship for the new ones in accordance with the fast integrating world market. Perhaps both are hoping to enter it together. And one of the ways of entering the world market is full convertibility of both the rupee and the rouble. The rupee obviously is in a better position in this regard. The rouble has had a whole history of state-created artificial value-system made for it, which went to create it.

And now a word about the criticism of the need for basic structural shifts. If the criticism came from the Right, one could understand it. But the those of the Left is supposed to possess a scientific method, particularly its communist segment. The issue is not the details of the Budget or this or that measure, but the very *strategy of structural reforms,* and this most of the parties, including those of the Left, are avoiding. What the Left fails or refuses to recognise is the vast change that the post-Cold War world has undergone. It refuses to see the reality of integration and globalisation by identifying it with some policy or even "imperialist conspiracy" and not with an *objective process.* The Left is still trying to inject Cold War feelings into the post-Cold War world realities. It has not, so far, been able to present any alternative in keeping with the new situation, particularly with the *speed* with which the changes have been brought about.

This defect in the methodology of perception has deprived the Left of a scientific tool. Consequently, it continues live in the past. ■

APPEAL TO CITIZENS

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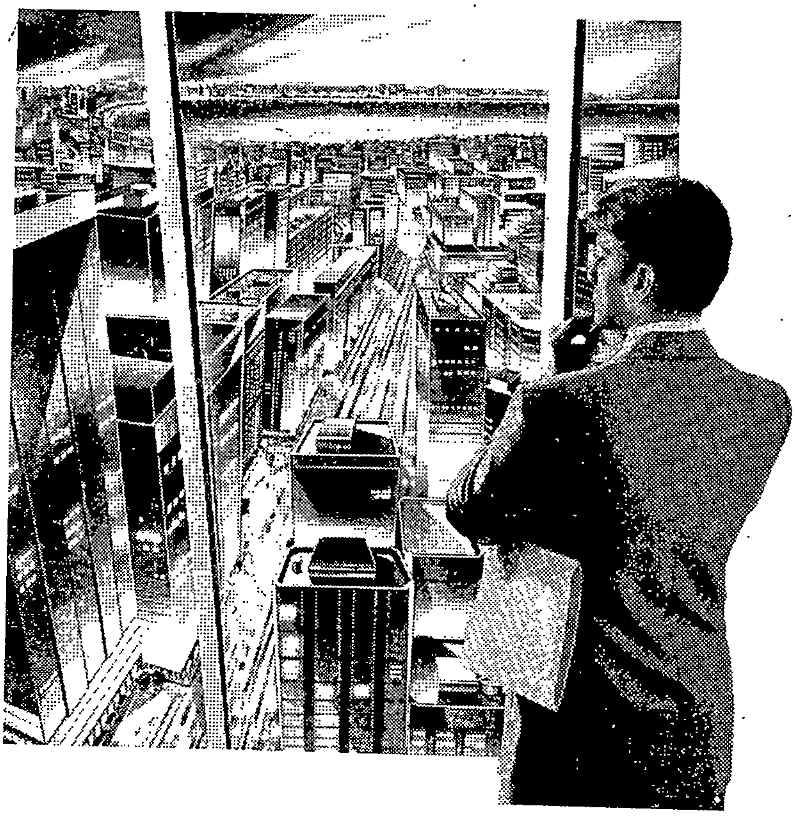

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Behrampada's Tragedy: Defamed And Damned

P K RAVINDRANATH

Incipient fascism danced stark naked in the riots in Bombay in January. Aided and abetted by land sharks, over-ambitious political forces with eyes fixed on power, their over-zealous recruits from the underworld and anti-social elements, it had its first dress rehearsal in Behrampada.

An obliging press, consisting of some reporters who are willing to go a long way with such forces and some who unthinkingly lap up what is fed to them, had made out that Behrampada was a crime-infested slum, full of Bangladeshis and Pakistanis and 'bomb factories'. They made out that several incidents that occurred outside Behrampada took place inside the shanty town.

What was Behrampada's crime? It had a predominantly Muslim population. Of its 51,000 people 12,000 are Hindus and some Christians. All through the riots in December there was not a single casualty inside Behrampada.

And yet, the notoriety that Behrampada cornered in the national press is amazing. The mechanism by which vested interests conferred this notoriety on Behrampada can make an interesting case study.

Behrampada lies east of Bandra station and is bounded by Anant Kanekar Marg, which leads to the Western Express Highway (or Ali Yavar Jung Marg), Kherwadi and the railway track. Adjoining it are Navpada, Jai Hind Nagar, Subhash Nagar, Shantilal Compound and Golibar, which also earned similar notoriety.

Why is Behrampada important? It is too uncomfortably close to the residence of the Shiv Sena *Pramukh*, Bal Thackeray; it is prime land whose value is bound to sky-rocket once the diamond bourse and the wholesale textile market come up, a stone's throw away in the Dharavi-Kurla complex, which is already a mini-Ballard Estate.

◆

THE campaign to defame Behrampada and then have it shifted from Bandra was built upon three vague, unsubstantiated and mysterious incidents, according to a study conducted by an intrepid activist, Ms Flavia Agnes.

It started on December 7, 1992 in the wake of the Ayodhya incident with an alleged attack on a wayside Ganesh mandir, followed by the sensational discovery of four decomposed bodies in the marshes of adjoining Anant Kanekar Marg and finally blown up photographs of two sadhus stabbed outside the Bandra railway terminal, across Behrampada.

The author, a vetern journalist, was Press Advisor to the Chief Minister of Maharashtra. He is currently the Director, Nehru Centre, Bombay.

Newspapers that published the picture, described the Minister of State for Home, Babanrao Pachpute's statement that it was a fake photograph as 'motivated'.

Behrampada has a Congress corporator and falls in the parliamentary constituency of Sunil Dutt. The MP had been nursing the area and had responded dutifully to calls from Behrampada for help whenever its citizens faced crises or threats of eviction. For all his pains, Sunil Dutt was assaulted by Shiv Sainiks on the occasion of the last bandh that the party had organised in 1992. He has been threatened now with the same fate as Rajiv Gandhi.

The miscreant who decapiated the Ganesh idol has not been traced. According to Ms Agnes,

> Even if it was a Muslim, the act of an individual miscreant cannot to be termed as an attack by one community on another as it was made out in the press.

On the wings of rumours, a mob collected in Anant Kanekar Marg. It came face to face with a mob emerging out of the Ahmed Zakaria Nagar, which lies 150 metres away from the Ganesh mandir. As there was heavy stone-throwing, the police opened fire, without warning, without a lathi charge or the use of tear gas.

The residents of Behrampada had not participated in the skirmishes outside Ahmed Zakaria Nagar. The police fired at the residents of Behrampada when they were in their *basti*.

By then, incidents had taken place in Kherwadi, Nirmal Nagar and other adjoining areas. In Bharat Nagar, across the highway, a mob led by the Shiv Sena MLA, Madhukar Sarpotdar, marched to the predominantly Muslim colony. The residents pelted stones at the mob. The police, as if on cue, began firing. Sarpotdar claimed he had gone to the *basti* to assure the residents that the Shiv Sena would maintain peace. He need not certainly have led a riotous mob on a peace mission.

The next day, December 8, a number of cases of looting and arson were reported. The targets were Muslim-owned shops in predominantly Hindu areas of Kala Mandir, MIG Colony and surrounding areas. Where the shops were close to Hindu-owned establishments, they were just looted.

In the three days, according to police statistics, out of the 22 persons who died in police firing, 21 were Muslims. Two Hindus and one Muslim died in rioting.

There was no further incident of stabbing or firing in Behrampada between December 7 and the end of January. But yet any case of violence in the Government Colony, Khar (East), Nirmal Nagar or Bharat Nagar were all ascribed to Behrampada, just to build up tension.

The Shiv Sena carried on a campaign that Behrampada was a threat to the survival of Hindus. White-collar residents of adjoining and surrounding colonies like LIC, Maharashtra Housing Colony, staff quarters of the Bombay Municipal Corporation and a small cluster of six-storey buildings—the new Middle Income Group colony—were quick to pick up the refrain. They wanted the eyesore that Behrampada was within their midst, to go.

Diamond merchants, wholesale cloth dealers and a whole lot of nouveaux riche would only be too happy to get Behrampada out of the way. The government too would only be too obliging, the official penchant for quick deals in land all too vivid in public memory.

The campaign of vilification of Behrampada rested entirely on rumours, like the most vicious one that the colony is full of Bangladeshis, that it harbours an arms factory and that any Hindu who dares pass through Anant Kanekar Marg ends up being butchered to death.

When the residents of Behrampada offered to rebuild the Ganesh temple, Madhukar Sarpotdar haughtily turned it down and instead launched a collection drive throughout the city for the purpose. A huge procession was organised to reinstall the idol in the make-shift temple on December 27. The processionists rained abusive and highly provocative slogans against the residents of Behrampada. This occurred at a time when some intellectuals, film artistes and writers from across the highway offered to organise peace marches in the area, which the police refused to permit, since a ban under Section 144 IPC was in force. Religious, marriage and funeral processions are exempted under the ban, even if secular peace marches cannot be permitted.

Secular forces, however, prevailed upon the police to throw a protective ring around Behrampada even as the Shiv Sena-organised religious procession was on.

◆

FROM then on Behrampada became the focal point of attack with petrol bombs and stones from an adjoining high-rise building on which flashlights were fixed, ostensibly for the purpose of keeping a watch on the movements of the Bangladeshis and arms inside Behrampada. The flashlights were conveniently enough helpful in blinding the residents of Behrampada while the attackers on the terraces could easily target men and women who came out in panic to put out the fires. All the attacks came during curfew hours, when the police were out enforcing the curfew. Subjected though it was to such dastardly attacks, Behrampada acquired a notoriety far beyond its crime.

On January 11, Sarpotdar was arrested with illegal arms by the Army. Since the Army could not detain a civilian, he was handed over to the police, who promptly released him, as the army refused to part with the arms seized from him. On January 14, Sarpotdar alongwith the Minister in charge of Bandra East, Ramdas Athawle, held a peace meeting outside the Kherwadi Police Station. Sarpotdar declared that he was prepared to maintain peace in the area, but he was certain that there would be no peace so long as Behrampada stockpiled arms.

The same night he was arrested. Defying the curfew, Shiv Sainiks gheraoed the Kherwadi Police Station demanding his release. The police obliged the mob, and a victory procession was taken out late in the night, in blatant defiance of the curfew.

On January 15, came the attack on *namazis* near Behrampada. Four persons, including a boy of 3 and a girl of 10 were killed in police firing. Who started the attack is still disputed, but the Muslims would certainly have realised that it would have been suicidal for them to start the riots when only *namazis* were on the road.

In the vicinity are the offices of the ONGC, Indian Oil, Maharashtra State Electricity Board and others. The workers' unions in these three offices are controlled by the Shiv Sena. These unions very obligingly issued press statements that since workers in these organisations did not feel secure, Behrampada must be shifted from their vicinity.

The last attack on Behrampada took place on February 1, which happened to be Sarpotdar's birthday. Petrol bombs were hurled at Behrampada from the nearby high-rise building, with the aid of flashlights at 11.30 PM. Power supply to the colony was also mysteriously cut off. A youth, trying to put out the fires, was killed in police firing. (Sarpotdar has since been arrested and detained under National Security Act.)

Falsehood, terror, a sustained press campaign and a concerted drive by a number of vested interests may still register a victory over the residents of Behrampada who have till now maintained communal harmony within the colony. That will mark the victory of fascism over secularism and communal harmony. ■

Print Media and Communalism

The Killing of Secular Events

CHARU GUPTA and M.K.S

As a microcosm of a community, the newspaper provides information on a variety of issues, especially communalism. In providing this information, the newspaper facilitates interaction with every major and most minor institutions in society. But the newspaper is more than a support system for the institutional network of society—it is an institution in itself.

A very important institutionalised aspect of the newspaper after December 6, 1992 concerns how it functions as a standardised means of communication. The newspaper, in employing a particular procedure for locating, organising and interpreting its content, actually kills certain other events. And in this process the content is usually homogenised. Thus, to a large extent the reader is deprived of seeing a coherent picture of the current events.

It is true that after December 6, there are many examples of 'pluralistic', 'objective' and 'truthful' reporting. But these have to be weighed such as to see on which side the balance is tilted. We found that certain news became frontpage news while certain others were relegated to the background. Is this consciously done? Is there a pattern to be observed in them? After looking through a number of news items, one could not help but observe that what conformed to expectations, what supported unspoken assumptions and certain news frameworks tended to become frontpage news. Also certain images are used because they exist and are known to have wide currency and therefore enable easier communication. In virtue of being used regularly, they are kept alive and available for further use. However, 'uncomfortable' news, 'contrary' events, which do not echo or confirm the larger opinion, are relegated to the background and inside pages.

In this hour of crisis, responsible journalism would also mean giving adequate coverage to people's efforts and secular event—rallies, demonstrations, protests, signature campaigns, citizens' committees, historians' evidences disputing the VHP-RSS-BJP claims—to counter this communal onslaught. However, their coverage left a lot to be desired. Why this ignoring, suppressing, killing of contrary evidence? By virtue of sheer intensity and duration of coverage of a particular kind, the newspapers perpetuated a hoax on themselves. It must be borne in mind that just as 'bad news' is more newsworthy for journalists than is 'good news', so 'bad reporting' is more noteworthy for reporters than is careful reporting. Reports that portray the mental and religious divide in the country rather than communal harmony tended to be highlighted more.

I

THERE were a large number of programmes launched by the Left, secular and progressive forces in India, especially in Delhi. There are innumerable examples of the poor coverage given to these in the newspapers.

There was a rally of more than 2000 students and teachers in Delhi University on December 10 against the demolition of the Babri Masjid. However, *Jansatta* (December 11, 1992, p.4) tried to portray a totally different picture and attempted to equate this rally with another demonstration held by some ABVP activists in the university itself, in which not more than 50 people participated. There was a false picture conveyed. The heading of the report was:

> "*inka bhi virodh, unka bhi virodh*"
> (their protest, as well as their protest)

Similarly, *Indian Express* (December 13, 1992, p.2) had a very small item on the Mulayam-Kansi alliance and that too with a negative heading: "Mulayam, Kansi team up against communalism". It is significant to note that on the same day the newspaper had a front page lead photograph of two youths and the caption read: "Two BJP supporters carved out 'Jai Sri Ram' on their chests while protesting outside the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi on Monday". Not satisfied with this alone, there was another big photograph of the same demonstration on p.9 with a big news item. In fact the newspaper had 15 news items regarding BJP-RSS on that day.

This selective perception obviously gives the reader a dominantly onesided canvas of events. It is clear that the BJP 'events' are news, not so much the other events.

Not only this, even the daylong *dharna* by journalists at Rajghat on December 15, 1992 received barely two paragraphs in *Indian Express* (December 16, 1992, p.5). On the same day the first page had a number of stories with a pro-BJP tilt. In fact the lead story had the following headline: "Adverse reports from Governors '*extracted*' " (emphasis mine), as the BJP Governments had been dismissed that day. Some words have a neutral connotation, which are not opinionated and evoke no emotional response. But the use of certain words, in this case 'extracted' has a negative effect, designed to appeal to the readers' emotions, to give a judgemental stimulus.

There was a huge rally of film stars in Bombay on December 16, 1992. The next day *The Times of India* carried a frontpage photograph of it, while *Indian Express* did not carry the news item at all. The next day the newspaper rectified it to some extent by having a small photograph of the rally but here also a visual cleverness was displayed. The photograph had in its centre Shatrughan Sinha, the film actor and a former BJP candidate for the New Delhi Lok Sabha seat. What was the newspaper trying to specifically prove? The secular credentials of the BJP? Similarly, the big secular march in the Capital on December 18 received precisely two paragraphs in *Indian Express* (December 19, 1992, p.5).

Nine youth organisations came together and chalked out a campaign for communal harmony. The news was treated in a very casual way. Some newspapers did not carry it at all. Others, like *Navbharat Times* (December 25, 1992, p.5), devoted two paragraphs to it. Also the report was written in an offhand and casual manner. Worse, on January 1, 1993, 'Sahmat' organised a huge communal harmony concert of artists, singers, etc. called '*Anhad Garje*'. More than 10,000 people watched this whole day programme. A number of newspapers blacked out this news totally and some which did report, did it in an insignificant fashion.

Thus in the selection and placing of news, there is a clear bias. There is a constant evidence of preferential treatment to certain news subjects. Almost anyone who opened for example *Indian Express* on December 15 and 16, 1992 could not fail to observe the BJP stance on almost everything, as it looked as if the BJP decided the items to go on the first page. However, only a very careful and thougtful reader would be able to find contrary news evidences, and that too by minutely studying the paper. What tends to get reigstered in a reader's mind is that which by its sheer intensity and duration of coverage makes an impact. The marginalisation of certain news items can be thus very damaging, denying the reader a 'pluralistic' perspective.

II

THE role of historians in the present scenario is a crucial one. The controversy over the mosque has a historical perspective. Let us examine the role of newspapers during this period regarding historical facts.

The most blatant example of bias and partisan attitude was the report in *Indian Express* (December 20, 1992, p.1) in block, which stated:

> Some historians and archaeologists who have all along maintained that a Vaishnava temple existed until the early 16th century at the disputed site in Ayodhya came up on Saturday with 'fresh and conclusive evidence' in support of their claim.

The report is quite long and is displayed very prominently, with two photographs to accompany it.

However, when another group of historians disputed this claim, the news was shifted to p.5 (metro page) of the same newspaper on December 26, 1992, and there too it was given a small space. The other newspapers like *Navbharat Times* and *Jansatta* revealed similar biases. Thus *Navbharat Times* (Decmber 20, 1992, p.1) had a big news item regarding the claims of historians that a temple existed at the site. It also carries a picture of the so-called 'evidence' on p. 3. Again when another group of 70 prominent historians demanded that this 'evidence' be examined by an archaeological expert committee and questioned the authenticity of the 'evidence', it was relegated to the last page.

This kind of 'killing' of certain news, relegating to background 'contrary evidence' enforced the opinion that the newspapers presented a framework which fitted well with their 'beliefs'.

III

TO add fuel to fire, some of the newspapers were not content with just 'marginalisation' of secular forces, they had to ridicule them. There was prevalence of certain images which at least implicitly were derogatory towards the secularists.

Jansatta (December 13, 1992, p. 7) has a detailed column titled *'gap-shap'* (gossip). The title of one of its items was *'prabhu varg ke liye naya nara'* (a new slogan for the intellectual class). Some excerpts of the report are:

> *somwaar ko dophar sare barhe baje ki baat hai. sansad bhawan mein arjun singh ke kamere mein neta-sampadak samvaad chal raha tha...matlab yeh ki sarkar ko parakram dikhane ke liye sampadak ne khub hawa bhari...apna to sujhav hai ki kyon nahin dilli ka dharmnirpeksh prabhuvarg ek masjid punarnirman samiti bandkar kar sewa ke liye ayodhya kooch karta? Wakt aa gaya hai ki ab yeh varg nukkar natak, byanbazi, boat club ka ghera tor kar dharmnirpekshta ke khatir ayodhya mein masjid kar sewa ke or barh jaye? bahut ho gaya talliyan aur shor machane ka kaam. apni babri masjid ki khatir kuch kurbani bhi karen. lagaye yeh naara ki 'ram lala ko hatayenge, masjid wahin banayenge'.*
>
> (It is an incident of Monday at 12.30 PM. In Arjun Singh's room at Parliament House, a conversation between the leader and the editor was going on. Meaning that the editor provoked the government to show its courage. It is my suggestion to the secular intellectual class of Delhi that why do they not form a committee for Masjid reconstruction and march towards Ayodhya for *kar sewa*? It is time that this class breaks the circle of street-plays, statements and Boat Club and for the sake of secularism marches towards Ayodhya for Masjid *kar sewa*. Enough clapping and noise making has been done. They must make some sacrifice for the sake of their Babri Masjid. They should coin the slogan: 'We will remove Ram Lala, and construct the Masjid there only'.)

Here the journalist first establishes his credibility by informing the reader of his presence at that particular occasion. Then he goes on to prove that the secular intellectual class is only responsible for various acts of the government. He goes on to make extreme derogatory fun of this class and places the secularists vis-a-vis the whole Hindu community. In this gossip, there is no attempt at information or conversation. Rather, it is a kind of an open attack by the communal organisations. And the target of this attack and ridicule are obviously the secular forces.

Similar is the case with certain cartoons which appear in the newspapers. In a cartoon comment, the use of a phrase and image that will evoke a similar set of associations and meanings in most members of a society, directly enables a complex point to be crystallised unambiguously and memorably in a few words or a single picture. Some of these cartoons enforce an image of secular forces being away from ground reality. The impression created is damaging, to say the least.

Take the example of two cartoons in *Navbharat Times*. *Navbharat Times* (December 12, 1992, p.1) has a cartoon in which a secular person has a placard in his hand on which is written: *'Mandir Murdabaad, Masjid Zindabaad'*. Another figure, who is supposedly the representative of the masses is saying:

> *"apne tukurjiviji, pehla darje ke 'secular' "*
>
> (our respected parasite is a first rate secularist)

Navbharat Times (December 29, 1992, p.1) has a cartoon in which there is a single figure, who with raised hands is saying:

> *"lar bhi lein, sulat bhi lein, phaltu kaumi ekta ka achaar to rakhna nahin..."*
>
> (we fight also and compromise as well, as this senseless communal harmony is of no use.)

IV

THIS marginalisation, selective perception and worse still a sense of ridicule against the secular forces obviously leaves behind a particularly false image of the issues at stake.

It would not be entirely irrelevant to make another point here. The influence of the newspapers on the common man has to a large extent shifted from their editorial columns to their news columns. Given the time constraint that one is faced within today's world, the newspapers are largely flicked through. Thus what is retained in the consciousness of the reader are usually the headlines, cartoons, first page news and block items. In such a case the convergence and dominance of a particular image here leaves the dominant impression on the minds of the reader. Obviously it is the speeches, statements and press conferences of the BJP-RSS-VHP which are dominantly retained, at the cost of secular forces and events. ■

(This is part of a much larger study on Print Media and Communalism after December 6, 1992).

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IMPRESSIONS

After Ayodhya: A Time for Action

AMIYA RAO

Recently there was an exhibition of Henri Cartier Bresson's remarkable photographs; among them stood out two unforgettable group photographs—rather group portraits—of great sensitivity: one of Muslim women, the other of Hindu women. The Muslim women were standing in the open, lost in thought, apart, aloof, gazing at the snowy peaks of Srinagar, entranced as it were, full as it were of a kind of transcendental faith in the permanence of purity. In the other portrait Hindu women were standing outside the *ashram* of the dying Ramana Maharshi—silent, tranquil, lighted up as it were with the flame of an inner faith in the imperishable spirit of truth.

The portraits had a strange effect on me. Oblivious of the murky world of hate and violence, of its ominous talk of minorityism, of its unceasing rhetoric on India's doubtful secularism and her Hindu nationalism, I felt I was in a luminous world of faith in the birth of a new nation, built on a solid rock of value—clear, uncompromising, unbreakable. Returning to the protraits once again I began to wonder if we still have such women in the homes of both the communities. Perhaps they could rise above the present madness which has gripped so many; perhaps all is not lost yet. But dreams are transient. They have no place in a cruel world.

Shivering in the biting winter wind of Delhi, haggard and woebegone a woman was standing at the gate of my house, holding a child by the hand, afraid to enter—in case it was the home of a Hindu. Once inside, the warmth lulling the child to sleep, she began her story. A short one, which could well have ended that night of indescribable horror in Kal Dongri, when here husband was beaten to death, then burned. They had laughed and danced around his charred body; then they had gone to the little bakery and torched it. The hut was looted and there was a huge conflagration, which swallowed up hundreds of huts standing in a row; in a few hours she had been turned into a homeless destitute. But because she fled with the child in her arms, blindly ran through meandering lanes in the welcoming darkness and survived, the story did not end. Perhaps, she said, it would have been better had it ended; now who knows where and how the story will end. What awesome future awaits her and her little son in a Bihar village, which she had left with her parents at the age of five? Looking at her child, she asked me: "What shall I tell him when he calls his father, and when he does not come to pick him up, goes on crying?"

I was silent, having no answer. A similar question had been put to me eight years ago—in 1984—by a young Sikh woman in Delhi's Kalyanpuri: "What shall I tell him, how shall I comfort him when he calls for his father and he does not come?" Then, as now, I had no answer.

◆

YET, it is not that we do not have seminars on the 'impact of communal violence on women and children'. Eminent child psychologists have produced erudite articles on the 'connection between a child's mental growth and his physical well-being'. There is no dearth of valuable studies; what is lacking is the interest on the part of those upper 10 per cent of the population. A child's mental health can in no way hamper the good life of these chosen few. For the ruling establishment it is too paltry a matter to waste time on.

However, the fact which can be ignored only at the peril of us all is, that for more than four decades we hardly had a month which was free from violence. Paul Brass' study shows that every year between 1954 and 1982 the number of incidents of communal violence amounted to 6933 and the number of people killed was 2723. Many more must actually have died, since no data were available for the thirteen years between 1954 and 1967. (*Cambridge History*: 198, Tab. 6) Whether the conflicts were communal in nature, as in Calcutta, Assam, Bhagalpur, etc., or due to specific policies or tactics pursued by the Central and State Governments; as, for example, in Aligarh or in the 1984 Delhi mayhem, in Meerut, Arwal or other places, violent classes occurred again and again. There have been many deaths, serious injuries, arson, looting, rape and molestation because of ever-increasing anti-social elements and indiscriminate firing and lathi charge by the police and militia, or their covert or overt participation and help to the hoodlums.

And it is there that the problem of a child growing up in violence comes in. The children who saw their fathers slaughtered, their mothers raped, their homes torched—who ever since their waking consciousness have known nothing but grinding poverty and hunger, have heard nothing but harsh words of hate and contempt—can they ever get over the shock, the anguish, the anger? These are the ones who, when they grow up, become the ready recruits of the various gangs in the underworld of every industrialised city; when trained they are welcomed by organisations like the Shiv Sena.

According to an old resident of Bombay, a large number of criminals belonging to the Shiv Sena—who did not spare the high-rise buildings this time—came from the slums. They were young and extremely well-trained, for they went around systematically with voter registration lists and targeted the houses owned or lived in by Muslims. In upper class areas, Muslim households one morning found chopped up bodies of little children in their garbage bins. Several doctors and senior surgeons who attended to the victims of the violence also made some interesting observations about the extraordinary professionalism of the killers. During the first round of communal violence which broke out on December 7, when Muslims were the killers, 'the wounds were lacerated', but after the 'retaliation' by the Hindus began, the "wounds I had seen were absolutely clean cut," said a surgeon in Sion hospital. "These injuries are obviously caused by someone who knows how to kill," observed another surgeon. Today, Bal Thackeray is one of the biggest employers of hoodlums who cannot be touched by the police, because he is indispensable to those in power. His well-trained gangs, with an aura of respectability, are for hire; the industrialists have long used them to break strikes; land speculators need them to burn down houses and huts, and evict the slum dwellers. One report mentions that in January, when Bombay was burning, there was 'growing evidence that street gangs working for major real estate tycoons cashed in on the violence to evict squatters from land' that could be 'developed'.

Amazingly, the State Government remained unperturbed. The then Chief Minister, Naik, was holding long parleys with Ministers and his own partymen. The then Union Defence Minister had specially flown in to the ravaged city and stayed on to use the opportunity to score petty, political points against the Chief Minister. Political rivalry had reached such obscene heights that the Army was not allowed to function, since it was the prerogative of the State Government to call in the Army; for some strange reason that call was not forthcoming. When it was called in, it was too late and even then it was ordered to function only in a few pockets while carnage was spreading like wildfire in new areas. In an interview to *Time* magazine Bal Thackeray boasted, "I'm going to teach Muslims a lesson." On being told that Muslims were fleeing Bombay, his reply clearly smacking of fascism was, "if they're going, let them go; if they're not going, kick them out." He saw nothing wrong in Indian Muslims being "treated as Jews were in Nazi Germany". The 'retaliation' programme of his 'boys' left nothing out from killing to raping, from maiming to looting.

◆

ALL this was happening when there was a government supposedly in the saddle, but no governance. Administration had collapsed, criminals had taken over. Not that the news of preparations for 'retaliatory attacks' did not reach the Chief Minister; he simply preferred not to take them seriously. After the violence broke out, he chose not to respond. Paralysed at his residence while Bombay burned, he "took adequate steps to restore the confidence of the people" by telling those who called on him for help to "go to Mr Bal Thackeray" instead. (*Indian Express*, February 26, 1993) Possibly, the deals and compromises the political bosses had made with the Shiv Sena delayed the green signal from Delhi. When demands for his resignation came from every quarter, and eminent citizens like Nani Palkhivala argued that Article 352 of the Constitution be invoked and Bombay be handed over to the Army, the Prime Minister remarked sarcastically that "able argument does not necessarily mean a good case". Narasimha Rao's answer to a Muslim delegation, demanding the dismissal of the governments of Maharashtra and Gujarat, also bordered on flippancy. "What can I do? The Chief Ministers are not my servants, how can I dismiss them?", he asked.

This absurd indulgence towards Naik invited the caustic remark from *Indian Express*: "A Centre that thought nothing of dismissing four Opposition State Governments on a pretext that was downright ridiculous, turned a blind eye to the appalling and abject failure of its own party's government." As much guilty of violating the Constitution as the BJP, Narasimha Rao had the gumption to tell such eminent persons as J.R.D. Tata, Nani Palkhivala, Justice Lentin and Ramakrishna Bajaj that his party's government was not to blame.

By that time, contrary to government reports, the death toll had mounted up to somewhere between 2000 and 2500. But feeling assured that politically he had become indispensable to the Prime Minister and would not and could not be replaced, the Chief Minister of Maharashtra had the effrontery to tell the press, "I have not failed in my duty to tackle the situation...Why should I resign?" It was the first day the Chief Minster left his residence to attend office—full eight days after the violence had engulfed the city. If this is how Maharashtra's Chief Minister behaved, the manner in which the Indian Prime Minister did was incredible. His callousness and apathy towards the stricken people reminded one of the harsh words of Rajiv Gandhi, when the grieving Sikh widows had come to his first public meeting at Delhi's Boat Club to be comforted by the new Prime Minister.

But Narasimha Rao followed the example of yet another Indian Prime Minister in both letter and spirit: it had been on the occasion of the Moradabad riots in August 1980, on the day of the Ramzan-Id, when "for the first time after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, as many as 130 people died in a single incident". (*Economic and Political Weekly,* November 3, 1990) Indira Gandhi visited Moradabad two months after the incident. She was in a great hurry, and except at two places she did not care to get down from her car. When she did, she defended the notoriously communal Provincial Armed Constabulary and roundly condemned the riot victims. True to the Congress culture, Narasimha Rao visited Bombay after days of violence, and that too most reluctantly. It is alleged that he did so only after the *Makar Sankranti* was over, and his stars were pronounced by his astrologer to be favourable. Heavily guarded by his Black Cats, protected by other security men and the Army, the Prime Minister did not have the grace or courage to leave his bullet-proof car, to spare a few moments with those who were still under trauma, those who had gone through unspeakable suffering. Nor did he have time to visit the devastated areas of the ravaged city. Yet, this city was the capital of the State which had put him in the Lok Sabha, when he was rejected by his own Andhra Pradesh. That much of Bombay's gloom came from the inaction of the government, that neither he nor the Chief Minister of Maharashtra reacted to the violence as it consumed the city, and that "he just sat there and just said 'yes, yes', when a delegation of Bombay's leading citizens specially came to meet him in Delhi to urge some action" did not go unreported by the Indian and foreign press.

Narashimha Rao's seven-hour Bombay visit was purely to give a clean chit to Sudhakarrao Naik—and implied his approval of the Chief Minister's inaction and indifference to the problem. A true believer in the adagte 'silence is golden'—something that has helped him all through his twenty months of rule in Delhi—was effective in Bombay too. When questioned about the Shiv Sena, the Prime Minister was silent, and to this day he has not had a word of condemnation for this fascist organisation. *Samna,* the daily newspaper published by it, and read by hundreds of thousands of lower middle-class and working-class people of Maharashtra, urged its readers on as the death toll climbed; even today the paper has not been proscribed. Meanwhile, in a press conference Bal Thackeray has dared the Centre to arrest him or ban his organisation; any such action, he threatens, will be resisted by all believers in *Hindutva*, and by his own organisation, which "has spread all over the country".

◆

THACKERAY'S thugs are still active. Muslim children are prevented from going to school, Muslim workers prevented from returning to their jobs. After dark no Muslim dares stir out for fear of attack. Bodies are still being recovered from sewers, roadside ditches and septic tanks; 500 men—all Muslims—are still missing and hundreds are still homeless. According to one report, "cleansing the city of its Muslim population is proceeding, not so violently, but methodically. Several thousands, who fled the city will not return, for fear of attack." As the *Illustrated*

Weekly of India wrote, "At the end of the tunnel we are, but there is no light." If this is the physical situation, the financial losses exceed Rs 8000 crores. (*Mainstream*, February 13, 1993) And this, at a time when the Indian Government is talking of improving economic growth as never before, when investment is supposedly a prime concern.

But even this is no concern either of the State Government, or the Centre, or of the elite. When the violence was at its peak, the city burning and the people screaming for help, the horse racing at Mahalaxmi was not cancelled—not even postponed; it is after all an essential item of enjoyment on a Sunday. It mattered little to the members of the Royal Western India Turf Club or the high government officials, that the families of their employees and fellow citizens were in danger, crying for shelter. The riot has exposed once more how callous our elite are, and how very distant from the problems of the common man.

Yet another example of this attitude was provided on January 11. At his home town of Bhor, in Pune district, the Education Minister of Maharashtra found no better time to celebrate his fiftyseventh birthday with great pomp and show befitting a feudal lord. Bhor had been in mourning ever since violence broke out in Bombay; several of the villagers had lost their lives in the riots, and their bodies had been received by their relatives and friends. The Minister had no time to even visit these grieving families. Instead, he was busy entertaining important dignitaries, senior politicians, Cabinet Ministers and receiving gifts—a silver chariot, a silver mace, to mention only two, and over Rs 10 lakhs collected from the people as their voluntary contribution to the great event.

These are our representatives. Their main concern is about themselves; the principal focus of their political activity is the struggle for power at the cost of social and economic concern. Increasingly, the question arises: is this democracy? The time to sit back and ponder about what went wrong, when, is long over; the time for positive action is long overdue. ■

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DOCUMENT

A Call for National Renewal

The Indian state is under siege. The social contract enshrined in the Coostitution is facing the threat of obliteration. The assault is no longer camouflaged. It is open and unashamed. The vested interests and forces of reaction are masquerading as the inheritors of the mainstream politics and making a determined bid to monopolise the state power. All this is being attempted by misusing and distorting the rights and freedoms guaranteed under the very Constitution which is being subverted. The governmental machinery is often helpless and at times even collusive. Falsehoods and fabrications are being spread systematically. Pogroms have been organised against the religious minorities and the weakest sections of the society. A madness seems to have possessed the minds of the young and a strange amnesia seems to have overtaken the old, particularly in the seats of power.

The crisis we are goong through is unprecedented. It is corroding the vitals of our polity. It is total, encompassing the social, political and economic scene. It has been brewing since the early eighties. The mismanagement of mid-eighties accelerated the process. The events and eruptions since September 1990 constitute the unmistakable manifestation of this crisis. We cannot view them as isolated incidents. Nor can we allow ourselves to miss the malaise for the symptoms.

I

THE first urban upheaval we witnessed in the recent years was occasioned by the decision to earmark a modest proportion of government jobs for the backward classes. The decision was, at best, a symbolic gesture. It was only a recognition in principle of the process of democratic power-sharing, of empowering the large majority of our people, the process which was, in any case, long overdue. But the entrenched minority consisting of the urban, the middle class, the 'upper' caste segments of society would have none of it. This minority is long accustomed to enjoying near-monopoly of all the levers of power in social, political and administrative spheres. It reacted as if the decision coostituted an unforgivable breach of its birthright. The mere thought of a few thousand government jobs slipping out of their control brought to surface all their dormant hatred for the 'lower' castes and galvanised these privileged social groups to embark on agitations which were undemocratic, uncivil, hysterical and violent.

The vulgarity of self-immolation was matched only by meretricious sophistry of the argument based on the so-called 'merit' and 'economic criterion'. The inherent contradiction in this approach did not strike their logic. The explicit constitutional provisions were of little consequence to them. The labours of the independent commissions were dismissed by them as so much of "vote-bank" politics. The millennia of the differentiated and unjust organisation of the society was conveniently forgotten. The millennia of exploitation of the vast majority of the lower social formations by the few at the top did not trouble their conscience. The only thing that mattered to them, the singular obsession of the traditional elite, was: how to retain the monopolistic control in their hands, how to hold on to their unfair advantage. And they carried the day. After fortythree years of independence a democratically elected government had to suffer a humiliating defeat for having made a symbolic move towards social justice.

II

WHILE this social upheaval was still simmering, a policy induced crisis was gathering on the economic front. In the immediaae perspective, it was essentially a crisis brought about by callous mismanagement of the economy at the macro-level. Its dramatic manifestation was seen in the near bankruptcy reached on the external account in mid-1992. It was not a product of some fiscal extravagance of the short-lived governments in this period. Nor was it attributable to the vicissitudes of the Gulfwar. It was a direct and unavoidable consequence of the profligate policies, of deliberate resort to soft-options in macro-management of the economy practised throughout the decade of the eighties. The government lived beyond its means leading to burgeoning fiscal deficits. The country lived beyond its means, piling up current account deficits.

The ruling elite had fashioned this strategy for its gains, but it would not countenance the thought of resource mobilisation at its cost. The result was that the share of direct taxes in the government revenues declined; the public borrowing, higher indirect taxes, and deficit-financing were resorted to increasingly. The 'growth' so achieved benefited the elite both as producers and consumers. The industries that grew fast in this period were electronics, white goods, automobile and synthetic fibres. It did not matter if they were less employment-creating and more import-intensive. What mattered was that there was more money in these sectors and they catered to the consumption pattern of the elite. Similarly the services in the government sector and in the urban areas rapidly grew. And so did the defence spending, both in rupees and foreign currencies. Aside from keeping defence forces, which include an important element in the ruling elite, satisfied, this spending had the additional attraction of sizeable kickbacks for the decision-makers and the middlemen among the elite.

In order to underpin this 'growth', a virtual important bonanza was permitted in the name of liberalisation and modernisation. How were the imports to be financed? The trick was to practise on the external side (while the going was good), the same soft-option technique which was followed on the domestic side: a reckless resort to external short-term borrowing.

The elite which controlled the levers of economic and political power garnered the gains, leaving the illusion of the shows and spectacles on the coloured TV and the polluting fumes of the burgeoning number of automobiles for the majority of the underprivileged and the powerless.

It did not seem to matter that the more you borrowed, the more expensive it would become and the greater became the danger of the future crunch on the balance of payments front. However, the crunch did come as surely as the night following the day. But even this crunch did not deflect the single-minded pursuit of self-aggrandisement by the elite. Nor did it benumb their problem-solving faculty. An even softer option was chosen: forging a grand alliance with the international elite of the Western industrialised countries and their agents in the shape of the multilateral financing institutions. With this the decks were cleared. 'No more worrying about managing the external account within your own means. Perish the thought of squeeze on imports.' With more and more borrowed money flowing into the Reserve Bank kitty, the imports have become virtually free. Imports of consumer electronics have been made cheaper and with few restrictions. Even import of gold and silver is no longer tabooed. But to ensure the flow of borrowed foreign money, one must adhere to the conditions and precepts of the moneylender. So follows the delicensing of the automobile, consumer electronics and white goods industries, no matter such licensing was considered essential until the other day because the scarce investible reserves needed to be discouraged in the socially low priority sectors.

Similarly it became necessary to ensure a stable and profitable environment for the foreign as well as indigenous entrepreneurial elite. What more efficacious means to achieve this could be thought of than prescribing a strict regime of austerity for the poor and effecting sharp cuts in the investment outlays in the governmental sector? So we have reduced outlays on education, on health, on rural development, on social services, on women and child development. The 'efficiency' must be attained and profitability improved by retrenching the labour and increasing the already huge legions of the unemployed and the underemployed. The government must spend less even if it means further deprivation of the deprived and weakening of the foundation of the future growth of the economy; it must withdraw from activity in the industrial sector; it must not tax those who have the capacity to pay. For the critical element of the strategy requires larger and larger resources, incomes and opportunities to be earmarked for the use and enjoyment of the elite. The strategy is tailor-made to suit the requirements and the interests of the privileged few. And the cost of the strategy is the austerity and deprivation of the majority who are struggling to survive.

Worse still, the cost of strategy implies the loss of economic sovereignty and mortgaging the future of the country. The strategy of forging an alliance with the international elite presupposes that important decision-making in the economic sphere will be left to the agents of the international elite. It also results in contraction of investment in critical infrastructural and industrial sectors as well as loss of social direction—the two elements so essential for achieving self-reliance.

The crisis on the economic side was the direct result of the policies of the elite designed to enrich itself and enhance its power vis-a-vis the vast majority. The solution of the crisis is being attempted by the elite through sharing of the power and the gains with the international elite, most likely with the lion's share going to the latter. In this scheme of things, the interests of the vast majority of the poor and the underprivileged and the future of the country belonging to this majority are of little consequence. In the eyes of the national elite, this is but a necessary and desirable development, the unfolding of the evolutionary logic. Should we not 'globalise' ourselves, they would ask. For them, integration with the international elite, their soul-brothers, is far more important than casting their lot with the majority of their poor country-cousins. For them, the thrill of globalisation is far more compelling than the call of patriotism. They are too broad-minded to be chained by narrow nationalistic concerns. They are too business-like to be fuddled by values like economic equity.

III

THE third and the most traumatic event is the most recent. After about four decades of the generally harmonious relationship, we are witnessing the vicious attempt to revive the Hindu-Moslem divide. It is not an accident or an aberration. There is a strategic concept behind it. It is a product of careful planning, orchestrated propaganda and systematic mobilisation. It is part of a grand design of the Indian elite—consciously pursued by some, dimly perceived by others and sub-consciously followed by many of them. It is worth remembering that the first massive mobilisation—the *rath yatra* of October 1990—was organised in the wake of and as a counter-blast to the decision on reservation in government jobs for backward classes. Clearly the symbolic assault on the privileges of the few was sought to be countered by reviving the illusion of Hindu unity and homogeneity. The intention was to confuse the masses and weaken the incipient mobilisation of the vast majority against the perpetuation of the privileges of the minority.

The economic policies of the eighties had, on the one hand, strengthened the economic power base of the elite; on the other, they had resulted in stagnation of employment, acceleration of the influx of the rural poor in the urban industrial and commercial centres, growing expectations of the underprivileged majority and intensification of the economic pressures and tensions for a large majority of people. Disequilibrating forces were gathering strength and the institutional order was weakening, particularly in the urban centres. The solution being pursued by the elite would only lead to deepen the crisis and exacerbate the tensions.

Significantly, the perpetrators of the revival of the Hindu-Moslem divide had extended full-throated support to the new economic policy. They had gone to the extent of reassuring the international elite that they need fear no reversal of this policy in the event of the protagonists of *Hindutva* coming to power in India. Clearly these forces have a vested interest in containing and defusing the mounting tensions between the privileged few and the vast majority as a consequence of the new economic policy.

If the *rath yatra* was in the nature of a counter-attack, the strategy to revive the Hindu-Moslem divide is more in the nature of a pre-emptive strike intended to neutralise the eventual mobilisation against the new economic policy.

What is of strategic importance for the Indian elite is to create a diversionary focus, to invent an enemy without. The illusion of the Hindu unity fostered by the protagonists of *Hindutva* has always been premised on the Hindu-Moslem divide in much the same manner as the Moslem League of the undivided India resorting to the cry of 'Islam in danger' to unite Moslems in support of a separate homeland. Falsehood, fabrication, rumour mongering, duplicity, terrorism and direct action—all has been grist to the mill of this ghastly endeavour.

IV

IT is not a mere coincidence that there is a remarkable overlap and large congruence in the different social segments or constituencies—those who opposed the reservation, those who support the new economic policies and those who are openly or implicitly supporting the ideology of *Hindutva*. They are but different faces of the Indian elite. Some wear the saffron mask, some a veil of gold and others a birthmark of merit. But beneath the drapery and the cosmetics it is the same formation of the privileged few.

V

THE death and destruction that was witnessed since December 6, 1992 will continue to be a blot on the fair name of India for a long time to come. But more disconcerting is the debasement of the mind of the youth that one comes across. The number of young, educated persons lightly speaking of a second class citizenship for Moslems or of 'ethnic cleansing' is not large; but that it should be a positive number, howsoever small it may be, is a matter of deepest anxiety for all those who swear allegiance to the Indian Constitution.

The last three decades have witnessed mercenary politics devoid of any ideology. The institutions of the Republic have been abused and defiled. The values enshrined in the Constitution have to many become meaningless words, rattling bones without any flesh and blood. There has been acute paucity of leadership which could command without being invested with authority, which could inspire without promising reward, which would lead, not follow. The only propellant activising a large majority of the young is the pursuit of economic betterment in a milieu of cut-throat competition and receding opportunities. The singleminded pursuit of the excellence in technical and specialised knowledge and competence has led to a tendency to discount the liberal education, learning of humanities and history and even the interest in current affairs. A corrosive environment, unrelenting pressures and an empty set of social conscience—these have provided a fertile ground for the sprouting and spread of the fascist ideas and techniques. This is the most forbidding challenge that the Indian society is facing today.

VI

IT is this milieu which has emboldened the privileged, minuscule minority to launch an open assault on the best that is enshrined in the Indian Constitution. We constituted ourselves into a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic. We resolved to secure for ourselves Justice, Liberty and Equality and to promote unity and integrity of the nation. Today, the manoeuvres of the so-called 'globalisers' are nibbling at our sovereignty. The unashamed advocacy of the *Hindu Rashtra* is an open challenge to the secular ideal. The appeasing or ambiguous responses by some of the old guards of the secular ideology have only encouraged the enemies of secularism. The increasingly oppressive and insensitive state apparatus and the degeneration and devaluation of the political processes are threatening to subvert the democratic character of our polity. The unbridled advocacy of the market and the pursuit of 'growth' and 'efficiency' *per se,* unmindful of its wider social implications, are corroding the vitals of equity and the socialist ideal. The growing disparities among different social groups and between women and men are putting increasing strains on the unity and integrity of the nation and already easy scapegoats in the shape of religious or linguistic minorities are being targeted for "teaching suitable lessons". The challenge to the basics of the Social Contract enshrined in the Constitution is complete.

VII

WE believe that it is our historic responsibility to meet this challenge frontally and with all the force at our command. We believe that the task is so urgent that we must instantly dedicate ourselves to it.

We believe that the framework of political parties by itself is inadequate for this purpose. We need to create a wider forum, outside of and distinct from the political formation. The essential task of the forum will be to educate, to spread the message of social transformation to which we are pledged under our Constitution.

We believe that the first and foremost task for us is to renew and strengthen the faith in Equity which should constitute the running theme, the unifying principle, the transforming force, the modernising agent and the harmonising principle for our polity and society. The primary manifestaton of this principle in our society and polity should be social justice and equity to be ensured between different religous, social, regional, linguistic or ethinic groups. The secular ideal is but a restatement of this principle in the context of different religious groups. We oppose and condemn the concept of *'Hindu Rashtra'* which is the antithesis of this basic principle.

We believe that the secular ideal is best adhered to if the majority religious group in a given locality or region takes upon itself the protection of the places and the freedom of worship of the minority religious groups as a sacred individual and social responsibility.

We believe that the much trumpeted 'Hindu homogeneity' or a 'Hindu social monolith' is a myth and perpetuating this illusion, particularly on the basis of hatred of minority religious groups, is a sin and a crime. It is a clever camouflage for perpetuating the age-old inequities and the privileges of the few. It is a diversionary tactic par excellence.

We believe that we must address ourselves to the task of reordering the Hindu society on the principle of equity and social justice. To this end the backward classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes must be entitled to share administrative and political power commensurate with their numerical strength. Indeed we must effectively enforce the principle of preferential opportunity in their favour. The 'upper' caste minorities who have enjoyed monopolistic privileges in religious, educational, social and political spheres must renounce voluntarily those privileges and encourage those long deprived of such opportunities to assume positions and responsibilities.

We believe that the essence of the socialist ideal, namely, equity in ordering economic relationships must be reinstated in its rightful driving seat of the economic policy-making. We condemn the surreptitious and open assaults on this ideal in the name of economic reforms.

We believe that the spirit of patriotism and humanism must constitute the basis of our political, social and economic organisation and our relationship with the outer world. We oppose 'globalisation' premised on the integration of the national elite with the international elite and at the cost of the vast majority of our people.

We believe that centralisation of administrative, economic and political power leads to inequity, disparity, injustice, exploitation and disunity. Decentralisation should, therefore, be the cardinal organisation principle to ensure harmony, equity and unity in our society and polity.

We hereby resolve to constitute a Forum for National Renewal dedicated to the beliefs and values stated above and to their spread and propagation to the best of our abilities, through individual and collective action, in every sphere of our activity.

We invite like-minded citizens of India to join this forum and contribute their might to accomplish the historic task devolving on our generation.

Where the mind is without fear
and the head is held high,
Where the Knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken
up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where the words come out from the
depth of truth;
Where tireless striving
stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason
has not lost its way into the
dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward
by thee into ever-widening thought and action—
Into that heaven of freedom,
my Father,
let my country awake

Rabindranath Tagore

Signatories

S.P. Shukla, Prof Surendra J. Patel, Prof Krishna Ahooja-Patel, Dr Vandana Shiva, K. Ashok Rao, Chakravarthi Raghavan, Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, Rabi Ray, Prof Amiya Kumar Bagchi, M.A. Baby, Suhas Borkar, Smithu Kothari, Dinesh Abrol, P. Sainath, K. Ravi Srinivas, Dr S.N. Chaturvedi, Jai Sen, Prof Deepak Nayyar, Vinod Chandra Pande, Dr Arun Ghosh, Vijay Pratap, Dr Ila Joshi, Prakash Shah, Father Francis Parmar, Prof Abid Shamsi, Fatima Shamsi, Dr Haneef Lakdawala, Sheeba George Lakdawala, Lalita Krishnaswamy, V.J. Patel, Kamalben Vasa, Diwaliben Patel, Madhu Dandavate, Pramila Dandavate, Rajni Kothari, Justice D.S. Tewatia and others

Place: New Delhi
Date: February 1993

HANUMANTHA RAO : Role of Ideology

(Continued from page 3)

The forces of religious fundamentalism have been happy with the existing package of economic reforms, because some of the groups which benefit most from such reforms constitute the social base for those seeking to exploit religion for political purposes. But it should not come as a surprise if they, in their bid to exploit the general economic discontent, hijack some of the secular aspects of the national agenda by calling for a *'swadeshi'* package of economic reforms, or even by tagging *'roti'* and *'rozgar'* with 'Ram'. However, they have a vested interest in perpetuating the prevailing social and economic inequalities and may resist any far-reaching measures for social justice.

No one would seriously question the need for economic reforms and restructuring in our country, particularly in view of what has happened in the socialist countries. But economic reforms in those countries came decades after basic changes were effected in socio-economic structures and after high rates of capital accumulation and high levels of human development were achieved. A package of reforms without regard to the socio-economic realities of our country is bound to sharpen economic dualism and result in widespread social discontent.

Even among the aid-giving institutions, there is a serious debate now on the need to reconcile the goals of economic efficiency with considerations of social justice in countries like India characterised by socio-economic disparities and widespread poverty. Certainly, a political democracy like ours cannot afford to run the risks arising from the implementation of reform packages which have failed to yield the desired results even in countries under authoritarian regimes.

Slowing down of the present pace of economic reforms is considered by some as a necessary 'concession' to the Left for forging a united front of secular forces. These analysts do not realise that, in a political democracy, the secular forces, whether Centrist or Leftist, may lose the battle if they fail to inspire the common people to identify themselves with, and actively participate in, the tasks of economic development and social transformation.

From times immemorial, great philosophers, sages and saints in India have been preaching religious tolerance based on the essential unity of purpose among all the religions. Yet, time and again, religious fanaticism held sway over the minds of the people. In a modern democracy, preoccupation with worldly or secular issues on the socio-economic plane involving active participation of the people can be more effective in combating religious fundamentalism than a campaign merely on the ideological or philosophical plane. ■

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Bombay Blasts ● Space for the Multitude ● Budget

Mainstream

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EDITORIAL

A Welcome Move

The traumatic developments through which the country has passed since the December 6, 1992 outrage at Ayodhya have heightened the urgency of preventing the use of religion in politics in general and electoral politics in particular.

It is in this context that the Prime Minister's March 11 statement on the floor of the Lok Sabha merits close scrutiny. Asserting that the fight for secularism and elimination of the religion-based approach to electoral politics constituted his government's "first priority", P.V. Narasimha Rao spelt out the commitment of his government in unambiguous terms. Recalling that several High Court judgements had already held the use of religious platform or material in elections as illegal and even set aside the results for such activities, he said what was essential was the removal of anomalies so as to ensure that violation of secular democracy invites stringent punishment. According to Narasimha Rao, the proposed provision "will come before this House whether it is in the form of constitutional amendment or amendment to the existing laws like the People's Representation Act" in order to "bring it in accordance with the secular idea".

The Prime Minister pointed out that dividing the majority of our populace on religious ground would spell disaster for our parliamentary democracy. He even went to the extent of underscoring that just as the government was compelled to cancel the Punjab elections when sedition began to be openly propagated on the electoral plank of some candidates, "use of religion in electoral politics would have to be prevented at any cost".

It was noteworthy that in response to an interjection from a BJP MP, he struck a self-critical note and decried the Congress' call for a "Christian raj" in Mizoram as embodied in the party's election manifesto in that State, and informed that the party had sin
dissociated itself from that statement. He reaffirmed that the de
he was keen to initiate on the means to exclude religion from el
politics "will overlap all other debates".

There is, no doubt, a degree of consistency in the Prim
stand on the issue. He had mooted the idea at the Tiru
the AICC last year. But thereafter, it is true, preciou
to translate the idea into reality. However, the eve
1992 at Ayodhya and the developments since ther
a qualitative change in the political scenari
deterioration in the overall situation being amp
tech heavy intensity bomb blasts in Bombay a
setting the Prime Minister must, without further p
out with the proposed legislation in the form of safeg

the existing law on the subject foolproof.

It must be made certain that the proposal does not remain a pious hope. The provision must be binding on all political parties and its enforcement in the proper spirit should be devoid of any trace of petty partisanship, and no political party should be able to circumvent it with impunity as in the past. All political organisations swearing by our Constitution must accept the concept of dissociation of religion from politics as an article of faith because otherwise democracy cannot be preserved and protected from the onslaughts of religious bigots seeking to divide the society along communal and sectarian lines.

Nevertheless, in the final analysis what is most important is not the law banning such campaign in elections but the display of political will in defence of the principles of secular democracy which have been continually eroded over the years through electoral malpractices based on religious propaganda.

March 17 *S.C.*

Meaning of Bombay Bomb Blasts

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

With March 12 there has arrived a new dimension in Indian politics--qualitatively different from what we have so far witnessed since independence.

Sometimes mainstream parliamentary politics was interrupted by outbursts of violece in some areas, and at some phase, there has been armed militancy as could be seen in the Communist campaign in Telengana in the first years after independence and the Naxalite struggle in the Andhra villlages or the Naga and the ULFA movements in the North-East. In all these cases, the adversary could be identified and dealt with accordingly.

The rash of bomb blasts planted by invisible operators in Bombay no doubt marks a new stage of technology in political activity which has devastating effect not only because of the cowardly cold-bloodedness involved, but also because it spreads a sense of insecurity and erosion of confidence in administrative and political authority in the country. If the government's image was shattered on December 6 with the demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya, which it had promised to protect, it tried to coup its position by the elaborate display of its ice force to enforce the ban on the BJP rally in Capital on February 25.

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took place in Bombay on March 12 is a matter of concern not only for the government but for the entire public life in this country. The Opposition in Parliament was within rights to question the efficacy of the government's intelligence agencies, pointing to their failure to forewarn about such a development, but one has to concede that such Beirut-style terrorist operations are something which could never be anticipated in any country before. In other words, political unrest in our country is reaching out to international dimensions.

Whatever the government's critics might say, it would be unfair and irresponsible to blame it for its inability to instantly identify the culprit in the bomb blasts in Bombay. It may be easy for the BJP leader, Advani, to rush to the facile conclusion that the guilty must be from Pakistan--that is what is least unexpected from anybody from his party. However, the case needs more serious probings though it is but natural that the needle of suspicion for such an outrage should point to our traditional adversary, namely Pakistan, in which the ISI acts as a virtually autonomous outfit.

The bomb blasts on March 12 have to be seen in the context of the unfolding scenario of all-round assault on normal political functioning in many parts of the world. In our country, the communal upheaval which has come like a great wave since the outrage at Ayodhya on December 6 has spread over many parts of the country a sense of demoralisation that after four decades since the blood-soaked partition of the country, there should be a relapse into such barbaric violence unfolding the gloomy perspective of continued fratricidal conflict in our country.

It is not just an accident that this new type of terrorist violence that was witnessed in Bombay on March 12 should come in the wake of the ghastly communal pogrom in that very same city in which the Shiv Sena could go on a rampage without any intervention by the executive authority--a city which has long been in the grip of magnum size smugglers and mafia does enjoying for long the patronage of political leaders of different parties. The phenomenon of car-bomb terrorism arrives when the moral of the nation is badly shattered as large-scale communal violence goes on unchecked.

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THE Prime Minister during his visit to Bombay on the day following the outrage of March 12 had stated that the bomb blasts appeared to have been aimed at bringing about economic disloction in the country. If one goes by the targets chosen by the assailants--the stock exchange, banks, hotels, airlines offices and all these in the country's commercial and finance capital--one does of course get the impression that the miscreants wanted to dislocate the country's economic life. At the same time, one has to take note of the fact that the repercussions of the new type of terrorism would be seriously felt in the entire spectrum of public life in the country.

For one thing, it was aimed at paralysing normal life in one of our metropolitan centres--and this involves a wide range of public activity--political, social and cultural, apart from economic. Secondly, this type of terrorist violence by invisible agencies taking the authorities by total surprise, has a serious impact on the public confidence in any government. Which appears to be what the perpetrators have been aiming at. Any government facing similar assault has to be well aware of the fact that such sudden violence, calculatedly executed, is essentially aimed at destroying public confidence in the executive. Perhaps this is the most serious political fall-out of such a terrorist action.

The target, however, is not just the government. In fact, the entire political life in India today is in jeopardy because such bombing can destroy all open political functioning in the country, the very basis of our democratic order. By instilling fear of violent disruption, our traditional political functioning in the open is threatened. It is precisely this aspect of the new phenomenon of evil in our political life that has to be combated by all political parties together if our democracy is to be saved from the onslaught of such inimical forces. No doubt, the government machinery has to be geared up to not only hunt down the guilty but to destroy their line of operation. At the same time, the leadership of all political parties have to put their heads together to ensure normalcy in political functioning so that such forces inimical to our democracy do not get an opening.

This does not mean, as some circles tend to do, that all parties must join hands with the ruling establishment. Such a coalition is both unnecessary and harmful to our democracy. Divergences in outlook and policy are not only legitimate but are proof of the enduring quality of our democracy. In fact, the thrashing out of such differences through the process of discussion and interaction is the very hallmark of our system of pluralism. While preserving it, one has to resolve certain norms of functioning which will provide no room for heinous violence as manifested in the bomb blast terrorism of March 12.

In this context, it is imperative that all leaders of all political parties impose certain self-denying discipline that their respective political parties would keep away from certain types of activity and propaganda which hits at the very fabric of our democracy.

In this regard, one has to take note of the Prime Minister's welcome announcement during his intervention in the debate on the President's address to Parliament that the government would soon bring measures to keep election politics quarantined from religious propaganda. Although the announcement was made before the Bombay bomb blasts its urgency is enhanced by the outrage on March 12. It is only to be expected that the government as also the Opposition will join hands to take up this long overdue reform in right earnest as the first step towards restoration of normalcy in the functioning of our pluralist democracy. There is no time to lose after the horrendous experience of March 12. ■

Journey to Recover Space for the Multitude

UPENDRA BAXI

At this juncture of contemporary Indian history, cruel in its silhouette, allow me to reflect on how time and space have come increasingly under domination of practices of politics. It is well known that both time and space have been deployed as resources for politics in human history, with benign as well as diabolic reasons and results. Time and space are also sources of power in civil society.

In Indian politics today, a mythical time has been reappropriated in a will to power to repudiate the core values of constitutionally envisioned Indian future. In a fantastic inversion of the modern logic of minority rights, the majority in India seems to claim the same hegemonic temporality accorded to minorities. Put another way, the reason why we give minority communities certain basic rights is that they can preserve their cultural identity against the possible tyranny of the majority by being able to reinvent their past. They can tell their stories about their past in a quest for an appropriately democratic, pluralistic political present and political future. The minority rights are narrative rights *par excellence*: the rights to tell their own stories against the metanarrative of majority traditions. When majorities claim isomorphic narrative rights—to reinvent their pasts—the logic of minority rights is threatened with annihilation. The differentiation in hegemonic temporalities—of the majority and minorities—is interrupted with cataclysmic consequences which we now witness in India today.

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BUT it is the conquest over space in the practice of politics which might prove even more catastrophic than the attempted overcoming of time. The event on December 6, 1992—and the events thereafter—enact a new political semiotic of space. On December 6 the sacred/descaralised space in Ayodhya engulfs the space of the Indian nation-state. A political formation proclaims its sovereignty investing itself with the power and legitimacy of a millennia old tradition, carefully divested of its exuberant tolerance and celebrated syncretism. In Bombay, Ahmedabad and Surat, bodies of hapless Indian citizens become the space of politics, and their habitats—niches of survival for impoverished Indians—are made into *res nullius*, a no-man's land, where the first coloniser may raise his black banner of appropriation. Urban social space is thus made 'available' through gross violation of human rights, through coerced mass exodus creating a massive phenomenon of refugees in India.

The author is the Vice-Chancellor, University of Delhi. This article is based on his valedictory address to the graduating students of the Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology, Ahmedabad (February 26, 1993).

Politics emerges now in India as the art and science of creation and occupation of space. A new form of power emerges: power of pure desire, acknowledging no normativity, no constraint, no restraint. In earlier time, we named this process colonisation and rebelled against it.

Today, even as politics of sacred sites threatens brutal assimilation of social spaces into political estates of a few, we seem to lack an adequate basis to interrogate spatial practices of politics. Our conceptions are too ridden by notions of time to enable us to fashion strategies to combat this new politics of space.

As practitioners of architecture, planning, and as environmental designers, the merging semiotics of politics of spaces should be of some concern and interest to you.

The time and space of contemporary Indian politics can be best summed up, in Deluze and Guttari's evocative phrase, as the paradox of 'deterritorialisation' and 'reterritorialisation' of social space. They saw in this twining the movement of late capitalism. If we accept the hypothesis that a prime function of a capitalist state is to site dominant power over space in the control of bourgeoisie and to disempower potential spaces of oppositional control, the tragic theatres of carnage in Bombay and Surat, among others, become easy of decipherment. So does the phenomenon of what I have called the absentee state.

The enlargement of political space, and shrinking of social space, represents then the dialectic of empowerment and disempowerment. If space is a site of domination, it is not by the same token a site of struggle.

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WE must not only focus on Indian practices of politics ignoring the globalisation dimension. Integration with global economy entails loss of national control over national, regional and local spaces. There used to be a time when "think globally, act locally" was the summoning slogan. But now the 'local' is fast becoming a ghetto of the global. You have just to ponder the growth of shopping arcades in Ahmedabad. Even a more striking illustration is furnished by a town called Por, on the way from Surat to Ahmedabad. In the eighties, I used to frequent Por during my rejuvenating sojourn as a Vice-Chancellor of South Gujarat University. I found Por as a bucolic resting place, resilient with virtues of diversity that is Gujarat. Now, all this is transformed beyond recognition; side by side with the dhaba foodstalls is the growing junkyard of multinational products, canned fruit juices, coke tins, smuggled electronic goods and the rest. The Por space is colonised with vegeance; and the life-styles of its denizens irrevocably determined forever by the forces of globalisation.

Globalisation of local spaces signifies the march of triumphant late capitalism which envisions the world bereft of pulsating plurality and enchanting diversity. It signifies a shrunken vision of the world where human beings are conceived of as ultimate consumers—receptacles of dumping practices of a globalising/ghettoising world economy. It signifies a world reducible to the world of Gremlins: occasionally movie-makers capture the becoming of the world with rare insight. Globalisation/ghettoisation signify a world without alternatives, a shrinking space of the world conceived as a sordid chain of supermarkets, shopping malls and arcades.

It is against this twin forces of ethnic practices of politics and the rampant march of late capitalism that Henri Lefebvre's statement should give us wherewithal for people's struggle. He said:

> Today, more than ever, the class struggle is inscribed in space. Indeed, it is that struggle alone which prevents abstract space from taking over the whole planet and papering over all differences. Only the class struggle has the capacity to differentiate, to generate differences which are not intrinsic to ecnomic growth...that is to say, differences which are not either induced by or acceptable to that growth

Is it a dream?

I see a world that will be free,
Where power does not count
Where money is of no account
Where women, men walk hand in hand
Where children play in happy bands
Is it a dream?

I see a world devoid of hate
Where each one worships as they please
Where every race and every colour
Form part of an inspiring frieze
Where tolerance unites the whole
Is it a dream?

I see a universe of plenty
Where children do not weep from hunger
Where humans are no longer bound
Where women fearless walk the earth
Where shelter is for every being
Is it a dream?

I see a new scenario
Respect for every living thing
The waters pure, the forests rich with life,
Where all can breathe the cleanest air
Where everyone walks tall and unafraid
Is this a dream?

I dream a dream that all of us
Must make real, Must bring to life
Have faith! We still exist, we still will
strive!
One world, One race, One unity
One world of Dynamic Peace!

Mrinalini Sarabhai

It is this struggle to which the Faculty and the Graduates of the Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology stand, among others, summoned to.

In 1850, a man called Karl Marx wrote that the classical saint of Christianity mortified his body to redeem the soul of the masses whereas the modern educated saint mortifies the body of the masses to redeem his own soul.

Shall we not, when it comes to choosing the models of saintliness, make the sage Marx our enerring guide?

I very much hope that the Graduates of the School, marching in India and the world of today and tomorrow, will repudiate the model of educated saints.

I wish you in a darkening landscape a journey into recovery of pluralistic and multitudinous space, where practices of knowledge will command the potency to shape and tame the practices of power. Let us move forward with a commitment which makes men and women of learning and knowledge not the slaves but the shapers of political contingency. ■

Bombay Riots: My Experience

HAROON RASHID

This is a first hand experience of the Bombay riots from Haroon Rashid, the Editor of Urdu Blitz, *as narrated to Shahira Naim. Haroon was a victim of the riots which devoured all his earthly belongings.*

— Editor

The Bombay riots can be divided into two parts. The first phase was immediately after the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The nature of these riots was similar to those that frequently take place in our country. Even in those riots the role of the police was very shameful.

I am saying this because of the approximately 2000 people killed, ninety per cent were Muslims. Of them ninety per cent were victims of police bullets. The bullets had either pierced their skull or head or hit them on their chests. This means that police had fired knowing well that the target would not survive. The intention was nothing short of killing.

A few days later when I and some colleagues from the press questioned the then Police Commissioner, S.K. Bapat, on the issue and asked him of the deaths, he said the Muslims were in a frenzy and were so angry that without fearing for their lives they confronted the police. Left with no option, the police had to open fire. I said: All right, but please also tell me of those who were dragged out of their houses and were killed by the police. These people did not come out on the streets. For this he had no answer.

We asked him why the police did not first resort to tear gas or lathi charge or even firing below the belt to avoid fatality. His answer was that if the police had not fired the riots could have become much worse and spread further. How worse could it be, we wondered. He then explained that actually the lanes and bylanes were so congested that tear gas etc. would not have worked. The police had resorted to similar brutal methods on the main roads as well, we corrected him. He finally confessed that they had directions from above. Plain and simple, nothing mysterious about it.

Another peculiar trait of the police emerged in that press conference. We asked Bapat about the harassment of Muslims by policemen with Shiv Sena leanings. He declared: "Once a policeman adorns the khaki uniform he is no Hindu, no Muslim, no Shiv Sainik. Just a policeman, nothing more."

After the press conference he took me aside and said: "Let me tell you, Haroon. During the riots I had placed Bombay in the hands of two Muslim officers." A moment ago he told me that a policeman in uniform is just a policeman and the very next moment he points out that he had selected Muslim officers for riot control!

This was the first phase of rioting. And in this the majority of deaths were from police firing. This is on the record. This sent a dangerous signal across to the lumpen and fascist elements itching for creating chaos. The police were with them. Sure enough, this was apparent in the second phase—which was not a riot but a pogrom to eliminate the minorities—nothing short of that.

I am talking of January 8. It was a Friday. I could see from afar that a mob of a few thousand was approaching my area. Let me tell you I live in Diamond Jubilee Compound in Thakurdwara near the Charni Road station which is a fairly posh locality of South Bombay. Mine is just a small pocket of Muslim houses. My family has been living here since 1925. This area had till now remained totally untouched by communal violence.

I could clearly see a mob was fast approaching. It first set fire to a hospital. Then they moved ahead and destroyed a motor driving school. Next to it is the Iran Cultural House office. In the first phase they had burnt the cars in the compound. After that was our area. After my area was another Muslim area, Sonapur.

In my area there are 2000 to 2500 shops. Of these not more than half a dozen belong to Muslims. Each one of these was carefully singled out and gutted completely. There was one tiny shop selling oil which was under one stairway. Even this shop was burnt in such a fashion that the next shop remained unharmed. It was a very thorough job.

You must have heard about the Dawood Batas. They had more than 14 branches in Bombay, owned by Sadruddin Daya, the ex-Sheriff of Bombay. Nine of these were destroyed. The Muslims of UP were running the bakeries of Bombay. There were 170 bakeries owned by Muslims. They were completely gutted. Not only were they destroyed but signs were put up warning people against buying things from Muslim bakeries as these had been poisoned! Imagine, photos of some of these notices were published in newspapers including *The Times of India.*

All these things happened in the second phase, which roughly started in the last week of December and is continuing even now (January 30). Every night we heard spine-chilling cries on the loud speaker: *maro maro, nikalo nikalo.* An all-pervading sense of fear benumbed the people.

In this phase the objective was to terrorise and destroy the economic base of the city's Muslims. The plan was carried out in a frightfully methodical manner.

The Bombay Muslims had a complete hold over four businesses. All of them have been totally finished. The timber markets of Mahim were famous. In timber there was a total monopoly. These timber shops kept burning for several days. Muslims owned small factories and workshops of labour-intensive industries like leather in Dharavi and elsewhere. Nothing is left of these. A sizeable population of Bombay Muslims was involved in the *bangar* or recycling industry. It is totally gone. Besides these, non of the big shops belonging to the Muslims survived. Noor Mohammed Furniture, Suleman Usman Mithaiwale—such landmarks remain no more.

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LET me tell you of my area. Just a little before midnight of January 8-9 the mob tried to attack my house. They attempted to break into our compound through the front gate. The other one leads to the mosque. (Surprisingly this time the mosque remained untouched. This was because this time they concentrated only on the lives and property of the Muslims.) A few days ago I had visited the police station to request them for police protection. They readily provided two policemen adding to the two already posted near the mosque.

When the attack started at midnight on January 8-9, I rushed to see what the policemen at our gate were doing. Believe me, there was no trace of them. They had run away. Obviously, the mob felt encouraged by such police behaviour. For one hour they kept on their efforts to enter the compound. They used soda bottles, bricks, tube lights. They could not succeed. Around 1 AM they left. Before they left they destoryed all the taxies belonging to the Muslims of that locality. This was a sort of warning to us.

I immediately rushed to the police station and told them of what had happened. I also complained about their men deserting us in our moment of crisis. Consequently, they increased the number of police from two to six. The in-charge was a policeman called Kamath. Whenever I called upon him he assured me: "Please don't worry. You are safe. Don't come out of your residence."

Dreading the worst, we waited for darkness to turn to light. It was now Saturday morning. A new day, we hoped. This time the mob had changed its strategy. It attacked us from the back of our compound. It did not have much problem getting past the nine feet high boundary. It was a mob of several hundred. There was no let-up. Every now and then it renewed its attack. First it came, say, every half an hour. Then more frequently. Later almost continuously. The day limped along. Petrol bombs came flying. Kerosene or petrol-soaked rags, soda water bottles and huge stones or whatever they could lay their hands on. It was an inferno and we were trapped in it.

Meanwhile, I did whatever I could think of. I contacted the municipal councillor of Thakurdwar, Vilas Vauchat. He is a neighbour and childhood friend. "So what if he belongs to the Shiv Sena," I thought. I have known him since my childhood. We have played together, flown kites together. I and my neighbours had even campaigned for him during the elections as we thought that he is a local boy, living in the building behind ours and will be with us whenever we need him. My relationship with him was personal and extremely cordial. He visited my house on Eid and I greeted him on Vinayak Chaturthi and Diwali.

In fact, I had regularly talked to him over the telephone about the growing sense of insecurity in our area. I had contacted him before Friday night, again on Friday night and then after Friday night. I asked him to do something. The city was burning and I feared the worst. He asked me not to worry and said that he would talk to the police and do whatever he could.

Surprisingly, I did not see his face even once. Ironically, my house was burnt by a mob which was attacking from the terrace of his six-floor building. He lives on the ground floor. That Saturday night the people of his building reached the terrace and installed searchlights to facilitate the destruction.

But before that were many agonising hours. Every time we faced this shower of soda water bottles and petrol-bombs, we thought: now this is the end. As the attacks subsided I rushed to the policemen posted at our gates. I pointed out the terrace of the next building from where the attacks were coming. "Please just don't sit here. Help us, stop these attacks. There is a way if you want." They pleaded their helplessness. It was not their duty. They could not leave the gate and go there. I begged every passing police patrol to help us, go to that building and do something. They assured us, took leave of us and went their own way. The CRPF people came, I took them a little away, showed them the building. I remember telling them: "This is a live attack, its happening. Please do something." Even this fell on deaf ears.

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WHAT was most disturbing, senior police officers came, heard us, assured me of all help and promptly went and chatted to the volunteers of the attacking mobs. This made me feel utterly helpless and insecure. The army came. I literally caught hold of them, asked them to get off their vehicles and see what is happening. "What is the purpose of your patrolling with guns if we are being attacked in front of your eyes. If nothing else just fire in the air." They told me bluntly they could not help. Their duty was just to take a round.

Surprisingly enough, one read in the newspapers that the city had been handed over to the army. But nothing of that sort happened. All lumpen elements know that the army would never enter the lanes and bylanes. This time, however, they carried on unrestrained even on the main roads. The army just took rounds almost like a neutral spectator. The goonda elements knew in no time that the army would only march past with a white flag and do little else.

As a result, the whole city of Bombay was at the mercy of these elements on January 8, 9, 10 and 11. On these four days there was just no authority to talk of. There is not an iota of doubt about this. I am an eyewitness to this.

To return to the events of that Saturday. Throughout the day I pleaded for help from all those who came that way—people from the police, including the Assistant Commissioner of Police, high officers of the Fire Service, the CRPF, Army—their complete insensitivity and coldness was sickening.

Next to our compound is another Muslim locality called Sayedwadi. Thirty to forty Muslim families have been residing there since 1920. Around eleven in the morning that compound was set ablaze. Till three in the afternoon that whole area was ablaze and not a single fire tender arrived. This was despite the fact that I franctically kept calling them and the police I cannot even remember how many times. "Please come, a fire has started at Sayedwadi, it is now almost 10 per cent burnt. Come, it is half burnt. Still come, it is almost finished." They either said they were coming, or they had already sent their men. Or no reply. After that episode, I realised that if something similar was to happen to us no one could save us. It was all so simple.

Around 4 PM when the attacks intensified, I asked some hundred children and women of the building to go to the terrace. I thought that at least this would be a little safe. But from the terrace of the six-floor building in which the municipal councillor lives, balls of fire and bombs were rained at our women and children. My wife and children were also there. By 4.30 PM these people began rushing down in panic. It was at that moment that I decided to surrender.

It was exactly 5 PM. Everyone was shocked. They thought here is Haroon Rashid, our neighbour, the editor Urdu *Blitz*.They had seen my photographs appearing with the CM, the Police chief and other important people of the city. My neighbours were so proud of my connections and so confident that I would see to it that no harm was done to them. But I could do nothing of the sort. I had let them down. I asked them to shift elsewhere.

I quietly got into my car with my family with little else than the clothes we were wearing. My concern was not what I was leaving behind, but what I was able to rescue—my wife, my teenaged daughters and young son. I will never forget that drive. We drove dodging attacks of petrol bombs. I covered my eleven-year old son's eyes with my hand to save him from the flying smithereens of glass from the smashed windscreen. The boy was dumbstruck. He did not utter a word for eight hours. It was with great effort that we revived him.

At 6 PM we reached a friend's place. By what I had seen on the way I knew that I would not have a home to return to. Still, one hopes against hope. I rang up home at 8 PM. The phone was ringing. I felt relieved that till now nothing had been damaged. I kept ringing uptill 1 AM. When I called at 1.30 AM there was no bell, just click... click... click. I knew it was going. At six in the morning I called a neighbour who lives near my building. He confirmed my worst fears.

My house had been burnt. Gone. For ever! My ancestral house, full of memories, my precious collection of 3000 books, my 34 diaries which I had regularly maintained for the last forty years and on the basis of which I was writing my autobiography. Things which we had lovingly collected for our daughter's dowry. But the most grievous damage has been to my trust in people who I thought were my own, in the police who I believed would protect at least a person like me. It would take time to rebuild this trust. This is what I have learnt.

But I will not give up so easily. I will rebuild my house at the very same spot. This much I am confident of.

As for the police, I know the only answer is to increase the representation of the minority communities. If the numerous promises made on this account by various leaders from Nehru to Naik had been implemented, we may not have had to suffer such humiliation.

Postscript: Two days ago, I was invited to my daughter's school for a prize distribution function. The Principal handed me a merit certificate which I have to sent to my daughter who is now living with her aunt in Varanasi. She has been awarded a distinction for being the best Marathi-speaking student. What else does she have to prove to be a gunuine citizen of the city. ■

(Courtesy: *Nation and the World*)

APPEAL TO CITIZENS

The outrage at Ayodhya and subsequent events have rudely shaken the foundations of communal amity and threatened the very existence of the modern Indian State.

The paramount need today is to promote awareness of this crisis and secure the commitment of citizens to the ideals of secularism and democracy. Please sign the pledge and retain a copy of the pledge and display it prominently in your home/workplace. The campaign's objective is to collect 2 crore individual pledges over a period of one month.

You can make photocopies of this pledge and become a volunteer by collecting more signatures for the campaign. At the end of this campaign a public rally should be organised in every town/city where the pledges have been taken.

Pledge

o **I have a dream of a peaceful, united, humane, egalitarian and prosperous India.**

o **I believe that this dream cannot be realised without rooting out communalism from our land.**

o **I pledge myself to preserve and strengthen, India's unity and communal harmony.**

o **I solemnly commit myself to the vow which Gandhiji asked of all Indians:**

"With God as witness, we Hindus and Mohamedans declare that we shall behave towards one another as children of the same parents, that we shall have no differences, that the sorrows of each shall be the sorrows of the other and that each shall help the other in removing them. We shall respect each other's religion and religious feelings and shall not stand in the way of our respective religious practices. We shall always refrain from violence to each other in the name of religion."

Signature ____________ Name ________________

Address ____________________________________

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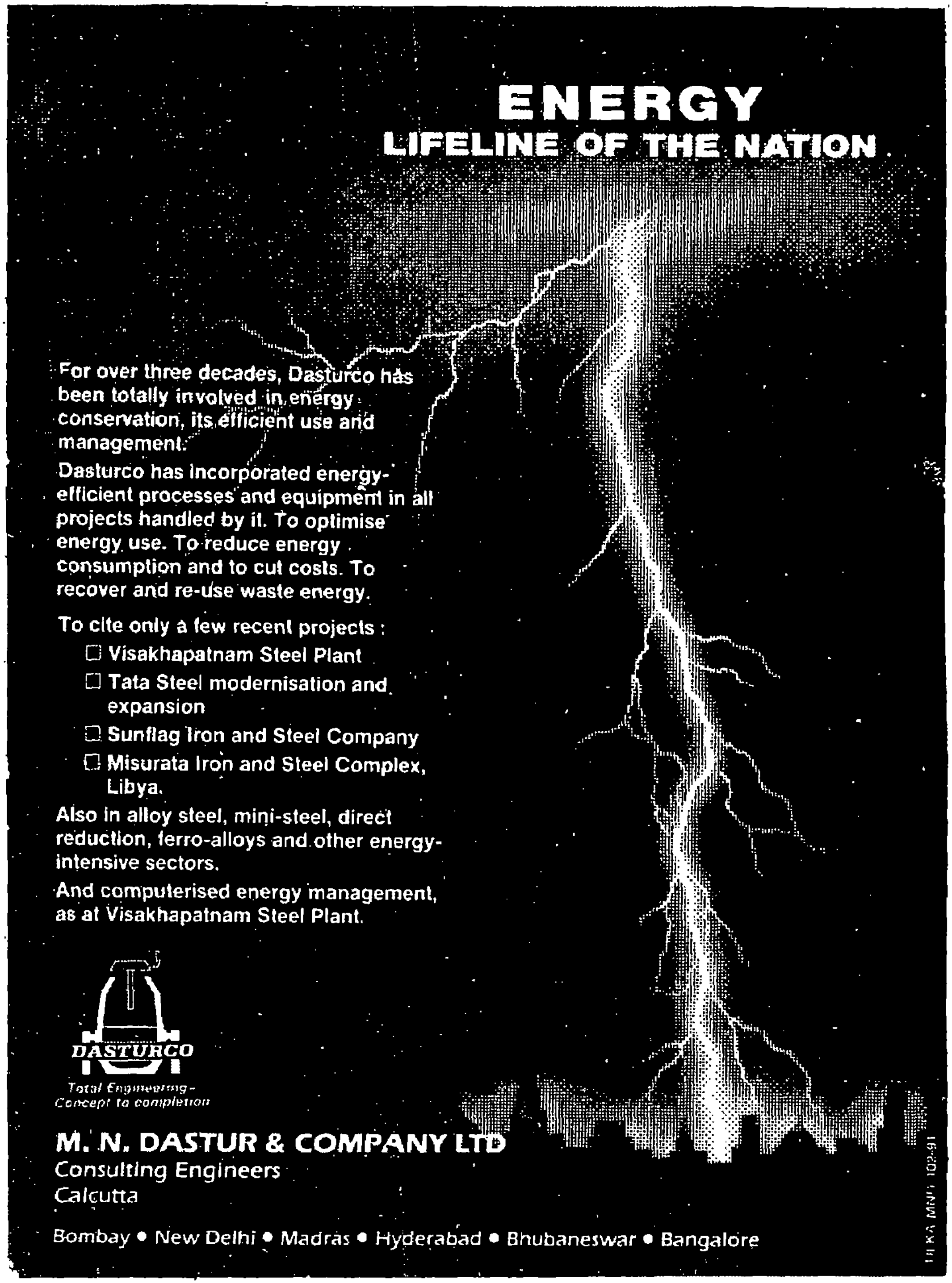

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UNION BUDGET

Beyond the Euphoria

ASHOK MITRA

Would it not be a folly not to look the gift horse in the mouth? A pampered upper middle class is bewitched by the absence of any fresh imposts in the Budget, and by the across-the-board lowering of duties on imports and luxury consumer goods. The farm lobby, the supposedly crucial conduit for the delivery of the rural vote is sought to be mollified by the benevolent reduction in levies on agricultural inputs and state-of-the-art farm machinery. Full convertibility of the rupee on trade account is to fulfil one of the Fund-Bank conditionalities which will also help exporters to add to their pile. Where does all this still leave the nation?

Those who have gone lyrical over the Budget would not for once refer to the various increases in administered prices preceding its presentation, including the increases in the prices of rice, wheat, sugar, petroleum products, steel and steel products, and coal, nor would they go overboard while drawing attention to the likely repercussions of the all-round rise in railway fares and freight. And the government itself perhaps only dimly perceives the ramifications of the decision to make the rupee fully convertible.

That the measure in effect implies a further devaluation of the rupee is a detail that will not, of course, find a place in official communiques. Following the decision, imports are likely to cost more in rupee terms. The volume of imports could also enlarge because of the general lowering of import duties and, more specifically, because of active prodding on the part of the Fund and the Bank: we have to give them globalisation or they will give us death. Should the cumulative outcome of the pre-budget price hikes and the full convertibility of the rupee increase the domestic rate of inflation to above 10 per cent per annumn and keep it there, what happens to the bleary-eyed export dreamers?

◆

THE centrepiece of the budgetary exercise is the assumption that the allurements it offers would somehow reactivate industrial growth and provide an extra stimuli to exports. Cost-push inflation could, however, set at nought such export optimism.

The Finance Minister has gone to town with the news that the fiscal deficit is being brought down to within five per cent of national income. He skirts round one harsh reality: the deficit projected for 1993-94 is still higher than the estimate for the current year, and his calculation hinges upon a certain order of increase in national income which might simply not come off. The sub-title of the Budget can therefore well be: "With-a-prayer-in-the-Finance-Minister's-heart."

The reduction in the rates of interest is also intended to encourage industrial investment and exports. This reduction itself could, however, lead to a diversion of bank deposits to speculation and thereby adversely affect production.

The other, bigger oddity too deserves mention: a nation, desperately trying to lay its hands on investible resources, whose external indebtedness is close to one half of the aggregate national income, the internal debt of whose government is of an even higher magnitude, is being urged to go all-out and turn itself into a consumerist haven. The poor, squeezed by increasing prices and growing unemployment, cannot obviously join the fun and games: they are by implication, offered the option of self-liquidation.

How will the picture emerge as the years roll by? The contradictions will not go away. The Fund will continue to breathe down government's neck, urging reduction in the fiscal deficit. Next, since taxes on those who could afford to pay them would be out, the reduction asked for would be linked to uninterrupted increases in administered prices. The IMF is keen to narrow the fiscal deficit, because that is, in its judgement, the only road to stabilisation and export growth. The *deus ex machina* chosen would waylay the objective. Your own rate of inflation is 10 per cent, while the countries in the west where you want to export manage to contain their annual rate of price rise to within five per cent. Others things remaining the same, the prospects of exports could not, therefore, but grow dimmer with each year. The only escape hatch would be to keep devaluing the rupee indefinitely. This latter step could, however, push up costs, and end up discouraging both industrial production and exports.

Desperate situations call for desperate remedies. Despite frowns from the Bank and the Fund, the authorities have to fall back on selective subsidies so as to shore up exports. Subsidies would become equally necessary to assuage mass discontent resulting from mounting prices. The pursuit of the goal of fiscal equilibrium would hence be reduced to a will-o'-the-wisp.

Consider then the overall setting. The fiscal deficit does not disappear. Exports do not rise. The government's unabashed pitch for ushering in a societal mindset of consumerism ensures a dip in the domestic rate of savings, even as, because of Ayodhya and its aftermath, foreign investors slip into the image of Godots for whom the waiting is interminable.

There would be much running, to and fro, within the precincts of the government, on matters concerning the economy. The returns from such briskness would be meagre: since even the comfortably placed could buy only a limited number of cars and refrigerators and such like, industrial growth would remain under wraps; employment would shrink even without an exit policy; the assets of the public sector would be sold at throwaway prices; as no major irrigation projects and no land reforms would be on the anvil, farm growth would lag behind the rate of growth of population; the public distribution system would be progressively dismantled in deference to the express wishes of the Fund and the Bank; precious little would be left of the Plan despite this year's higher allocations posited on presumptive higher revenues; a sullenness would envelop the economy, complementing the uncertainty in the polity.

Given this background, imagine what might happen were the monsoon to fail either this year or the next. We have had five successive years of reasonably good rainfall, and it would not be unacceptable behaviour on the part of the rain god if he chooses to play hooky for a year or two. The partial turnaround in economic growth in 1992-93, with respect to which the official *Economic Survey* sets aside so much of adulatory prose, is essentially a contribution of the farm sector.

Suppose the rains fail in 1993-94, and farm output declines. The public distribution system would quickly dry up. The government would be under immense political pressure to increase subsidies here, there, everywhere. It would be forced to arrange for emergency import of foodgrains.

Meanwhile the general price level would soar. The higher rate of increase in the prices of essential commodities—a common feature in times of inflation—would mean a further decline in the rate of domestic savings. This, combined with the enlarged scope galloping prices would provide for rampant speculation, would induce a large-scale draining of funds away from productive activities.

Taking advantage of the situation, sharks on the prowl would make an extraordinary quantity of quick money. With a dip in private investment and scant developmental outlay on the government account, employment would shrivel. Given high and rising prices so too would be the dream of spectacular export growth.

Say not the labour not availeth: zero or negative growth, a bulge in the trade deficit because of larger food imports, rising unemployment, a shift in income distribution away from the poor in favour of the affluent sections, the inevitable further rise in external indebtedness. Superimpose on all this the persistent post-Ayodhya troubles, the unending ethnic and caste confrontation, and volatile developments in Centre-State relations, as exemplified by Jayalalitha's flip-flops. India could perhaps still bungle along, but for how long.

◆

THE calculations of the Ministry of Finance are not by any means besmirched by any gloomy prognoses of the above sort. The international financial institutions have issued certain directives, which have to be implemented through the Budget. Whether these instructions, once implemented, would in fact do more harm than good to the economy is apparently not on the Ministry's agenda. It leads a sanitised existence, excluded from the risk of contamination by the realities of India. Industrialists, buoyed by a budget with no taxes and lowered duties, are also without their thinking cap, if they ever had any. Perhaps the dream is now concentrated on the visage of a comprador government and a comprador industry; the country is too much for us, let the foreigner take over and assure us a regular allowance.

The quantum of such allowance, in the form of loans repayable with interest, has been currently fixed at around seven to eight billion dollars per year. But suppose there is a run against the now-fully-convertible rupee and, to restore international confidence in the currency, the government chooses to intervene in the foreign exchange market by buying back rupees with dollars. Would any extra allowance be available from the foreigners for that purpose? ■

(Courtesy: *Newstime*)

UNION BUDGET

Tightening Coils of International Capital

ARUN KUMAR

Dr Manmohan Singh's third Budget has been hailed as 'historic' because it introduces a unified exchange rate, allows foreign goods to come in more easily and substantially cuts customs duties. India had a unified exchange rate till the other day (July 1991) but now restrictions on trade related foreign exchange transactions have been removed. Even though businessmen have generally welcomed the Budget, the share market has reacted negatively and the price of gold has shot up. Maybe these are temporary aberrations. The Budget is cleverly crafted to give a little to each of the vocal sections of society. It is, therefore, seen by the ruling party as a good budget.

I

THE IMF and the World Bank, the present-day masters of the Government of India, also appear to be happy. This is a little surprising since for 1992-93, the budget deficit, the revenue deficit and the fiscal deficit are all higher than what they were budgeted for. Moreover, the Finance Minister has been allowed to budget for a yet higher revenue deficit and fiscal deficit (five per cent of the GDP) for 1993-94. It was expected that the government which is negotiating for the 'soft loans' (called EFF and EASF) would be required to bring down the fiscal deficit to four per cent of the GDP.

In brief, all the sections that count are happy with Dr Manmohan Singh. But 97 per cent of India that does not count is missing from this happy picture. One may ask: what is in store for India? The IMF and the World Bank are hard headed negotiators and if they are letting India off the hook there must be a reason. Clearly, a trade-off is indicated. The Fund-Bank has managed to have the Indian markets opened up for international capital sooner than they expected. In return, they have given political backing to the ruling party. The smoke-screen of a 'soft budget' for the vocal sections was required to camouflage the likely impact of opening up of the Indian economy. The English language press has hailed the Budget on behalf of their readership which they call the Public (vocal sections).

The further marginalisation of the non-vocal 97 per cent of the population by the present Budget is evident. Pre-budget increases in administered prices had taken away from the general public (those left out by the English press from their definition of Public) more than what has been now conceded. Increases in prices of foodgrains, sugar, coal, railway travel, etc. had already occurred. The general public is facing greater unemployment, unabated price rise, exit policy, etc. In other words, their purchasing power is under constant attack. Arthur Dunkel, the surplus farmers and traders must indeed be happy with the Union Budget for 1993-94: foodgrains trade will now be free. This will have serious implications for procurement and public distribution and consequently for the prices of food. Again, the vocal sections have won at the expense of the rest.

II

THE *inflationary pressures* in the economy are strong. The average rate of inflation in the economy for 1992-93 is close to 10 per cent in spite of a good harvest and a decline in the prices of food items. The prices of manufactured products and energy have risen steeply in 1992-93. This was on account of the cost-push elements like devaluation, cuts in subsidies and administered price increases. These cost-push elements will continue in 1993-94. Monsoon is a matter of chance; so the behaviour of food prices cannot be predicted at this juncture.

With the unified exchange rate and consequent devaluation, the prices of imported energy, food and fertiliser are going to rise; or else the subsidies bill will go up. Since the amount budgeted for subsidies has been drastically cut, the latter is not feasible. The public sector is required to raise a whopping sum of Rs 40,700 crores for the Plan next year. Given the present

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state of the public sector this is not feasible unless they are allowed to raise their prices substantially.

The average kerosense and LPG prices are likely to rise with the recent introduction of dual markets for these products. Supplies from the present dealers will be cut to contain susidies. The non-vocal sections will be forced to buy in the free market. Over time the controlled market in these products is likely to be eliminated and the prices would rise.

Deficits in the 1992-93 Budget were larger than planned under the stabilisation policies of the government and consequently the M3 rose quite rapidly in spite of there being no build-up of foreign exchange reserves. The fiscal and revenue deficits are being allowed to rise further in 1993-94 so that expansion of money supply will continue unabated. Simultaneously, the SLR is sought to be lowered. This will feed liquidity into private hands. Liquidity in the hands of speculators is on the rise with the inflow of gold and silver. All this is inflationary.

This is not all. The Budget does not come clean on several items of expenditures and mobilisation of resources. For instance, the provision for the banks' equity of Rs 5700 crores has not been shown under capital account. Any collections on account of gold bonds will mean additional borrowings and an increase in the fiscal deficit. Not only has this not been stated but budgetary losses due to likely sales of gold abroad are not indicated. There is inadequate provision for next year for subsidy on food and fertiliser. The implication is that the prices of food and fertiliser will be raised further in 1993-94; but this is not stated.

With devaluation, capital expenditure on Defence will rise but an inadequate provision has been made for this. Similarly, the IEBR of the public sector for the Plan funds has been increased by Rs 11,000 crores when this year's targets have yet to be achieved. The public sector's mobilisation of resources from the bond markets is reported to be short by Rs 6500 crores this year. If this is correct, it is unclear how the Plan expenditures in 1992-93 are being met and how more money will be raised next year. Similar is the case with the sale of public sector equity. In brief, if the Plan expenditures in 1993-94 are to be at the budgeted amount, deficits will turn out to be even higher than what they are budgeted for. All the above mentioned factors will keep the inflationary potential for 1993-94 at a high level.

III

RECESSION in industry is sought to be overcome. The government is banking on cuts in excise duties to lead to lower prices and a rise in demand in the economy. However, this is unlikely to happen except in the case of a few white (luxury) goods since costs have risen (freight, steel, cement, coal, energy, etc.). However, the markets for white goods are so narrow that even if they do better, their impact on the overall rate of growth is small. In the case of mass consumption goods, the excise duty cuts are marginal and inadequate to compensate for the cost-push elements. Recession is likely to continue in these sectors and, therefore, in the economy as a whole.

Growth is sought to be accelerated through a 32 per cent increase in *Plan allocations*. However, as mentioned, this step-up is unlikely to be attained since it is dependent on the public sector's performance. Profitability of the public sector is unlikely to be as high as assumed in the Budget given the growing sickness, recession, loss of market to the MNCs and poor orders book position. When the Plan funds are cut due to inadequacy of resources and in order to control demand to curb inflation, the first cuts will be made in the social sectors and allocations for the rural sectors, as in 1991-92. This would lower the employment potential of the economy and cause the recessionary tendencies to deepen.

Recession is also likely to deepen as markets are lost by national firms to the MNCs. With the lowering of customs duties and removal of quantitative restrictions, in spite of devaluation, Indians will buy more of foreign goods. In the case of many industrial projects, foreign machinery will be preferred even when Indian machinery is available. A recent case in point is the power sector where the BHEL is languishing while power plants from abroad are coming into the country. In the case of the fertiliser industry, the DAP units are planning to close down due to imports of DAP.

Private investments are unlikely to respond to the one per cent cut in interest rates. It is too small to spur investments. The instability in the share markets will work against long-run investments. In 1992-93, even though the capital raised in the markets was large what was utilised for long term investment was only a small fraction of this. For the same reasons foreign institutional investors who have been given further concessions on short-term speculative activity are unlikely to come to India. In any case, no substantial foreign investment is likely to come with the continued uncertainty on the political and economic fronts. In 1992-93 though the number of approvals was large, the actual amount that finally came was small.

In brief, only if the Plan expenditures are genuinely raised and the monsoon continues to be good, does the economy have a chance to come out of recession in 1993-94. Those who are being given massive concessions are not in a position to overcome recession by themselves. The budgetary concessions appear to be attempts to gain political support.

This is the reason that the direct tax net is not being widened. Last year a presumptive tax was introduced for shopkeepers but it has turned out to be a complete failure. Adequate efforts were not made. Why this softness to those who are relatively well-off? The black economy which is estimated to be at least Rs 2,30,000 crores in 1993-94 is not being tackled. In fact, the tax structure has been made more complicated through grant of various concessions to the vocal sections. This enables further generation of black incomes.

To sum up, with inflation unabated and recession likely to continue, the purchasing power of the non-vocal sections is being seriously eroded. Whatever they may get as a result of any increase in the social sector expenditures they will lose much more through other mechanisms. Even for a politically powerful section, like the surplus farmers there are problems in store. They are getting higher procurement prices but their input costs are rising and the expenditres on rural areas as a percentage of the total expenditures (Plan plus non-Plan) are slated to fall as compared to 1992-93 (from 13.23 per cent to 12.85 per cent).

IV

ALL this could pale into insignificance as the full impact of the *opening of the Indian markets* is felt by the people of India. For any capital, markets are critical for its expansion. International capital has had a limited access to the Indian markets since the mid-fifties. It has been trying to have this changed without much success. In 1991, with the economic crisis deepening, international capital got its opportunity. The 1993-94 Union Budget has opened wide the doors of the Indian economy.

By March 31, 1993, India's foreign debt will surpass the figure of $ 84 billion. It is rising rapidly because imports are shooting up while exports are barely increasing. In 1992-93, the country is facing a shortfall of foreign exchange to the tune of $ 7 billion (current account) and this has to be made up by borrowing. That is, the debt rises. In 1993-94, the deficit is likely to be even larger, perhaps $ 10 billion. The reason is that imports will surge with the opening of the markets and lower customs duties. Assuming that exports begin to rise, they can only do so with a time lag; the deficit will rise in the meanwhile.

The country is splurging when it is being declared bankrupt by others. Import of gold, silver, luxury goods, etc. are being allowed when there is insufficient money to import the essentials of life. The patient is feasting instead of taking medicine. Where will the country get the $ 10 billion next year?

With repayments, not much net inflow of funds is likely from either the bilateral or multilateral sources or from NRIs or international commercial banks. The government is counting on two sources. First, flows from the illegal markets (*havala*) may get diverted to the legal markets; and secondly, large inflow of foreign capital into India will occur.

The *havala* market is unlikely to disappear. Indian businessmen like to hold foreign exchange abroad for business there. Flight of capital for this purpose will continue and since money for this has to be illegally obtained, the *havala* markets will not disappear. Further, if expectations of devaluation get entrenched, then flight of capital will increase and the *havala* markets will continue to prosper. Clearly, expectations will play an important role. In turn, these will depend on the rate of inflation in the Indian economy and whether the foreign exchange crisis deepens. With regard to the seond source, as already argued, foreign capital is unlikely to come to India in large amounts or help overcome the shortage of foreign exchange.

If the *havala* market continues to exist, flight of capital is unabated and foreign capital does not bite the bait, the country will face a serious balance of payments problem in 1994. With this, the rupee would slide downward against the foreign exchange. This would aggravate flight of capital, make people hold gold and foreign exchange and foreign capital will further shy away since it would fear default. This is a cumulatively destabilising situation. The country is on the razor's edge.

If inflation kicks up as already argued (due to administered price increases, devaluation and an indifferent monsoon), then the situation could deteriorate much faster: the country would fall off the razor's edge. With inflation, a large current account deficit and an open economy, the government would have to let the rupee continuously slide down in the hope of arresting the flight of capital and attracting foreign capital.

In an attempt to control inflation, the government would be forced to curtail demand. Plan expenditures and specially those on the social sectors would have to be drastically pruned. The 32 per cent step-up in Plan expenditures in 1993-94 is an attempt to expand the Indian markets for the MNCs. Not much employment generatin is expected from this but when Plan cuts occur in the social sectors, unemployment would rise and its ill-effects would not be mitigated. The country would face a mix of three ills in various degrees: unemployment, inflation and devaluation.

However, there is a circuit breaker in the system: the unorganised sector. This sector traditionally absorbs the shock of inflation and that is why the Indian inflation rate will not go to the Latin American levels. But in India, even a 25 per cent rate of inflation is intolerable for the poor. A rapid rise in social tensions can be expected.

V

IT is then clear that in the name of 'globalisation' and 'liberalisation' the country is being taken for a ride. Even if globalisation is thought to be desirable, its *sequencing* is completely wrong. There are four reasons for this.

First, the fiscal adjustments are not being carried out to cut the revenue deficit, and the fiscal deficit is not being further reduced. As the economy is opened up, this causes demand to leak out of the economy and the trade deficit rises. Second, the rising trade deficit has increased the capacity of international capital to extract greater concessions from India. Third, the country is returning to the profligacy of the eighties before it is able to pay for its improts of essentials. Finally, before indigenous industry has had a chance to adjust to the shocks already introduced, fresh shocks are being introduced. The high cost structure of industry, a consequence of high interest rates and indirect taxes, needed to be lowered before opening up.

International capital recognising India's weaknesses has already extracted a very high price in the form of concessions and access to the markets. Some of these are the almost 90 per cent devaluation of the rupee since January 1991, the increase in the foreign debt in rupee terms by a factor of 2.4 without Indian's being better off, the rise in the debt servicing burden and the increase in the debt-GDF ration. Phased manufacturing programmes have been withdrawn and restrictions on dividend repartriation have been ended.

Foreign capital is getting better treatment than national capital. Like in banking, power and infrastructure. A larger reduction in customs duties than in excise duties is another concession. Even the excise duty concessions will benefit international capital operating in the luxury goods areas. In return, international capital has conceded nothing, not even obliging the policy-makers with flow of capital or use of India for launching exports. They are arguing for more concessions.

Through all these manoeuvres, international capital is trying to gain control over the Indian markets and Indian capital. With small amounts of their own capital, they are attempting to control large blocks of Indian capital. In the power sector, as things are, each $ of capital brought in would control Rs 250 of Indian capital. In the case of the sale of public sector equity at rock bottom prices, assets are being sold at a fraction of the replacement cost of these units. Many of these units are likely to end up with the MNCs.

VI

POLICY-MAKERS have been progressively losing control over Indian capital since it has used illegal channels. Now this process will go one step further with the opening up. Even Indian capital is demanding more and more concessions to invest in the Indian economy.

As the Indian economy loses control over its own capital and labour, the policy-makers' capacity to counter social and economic problems will decline.

a. The critical problems of unemployment, inflation and control of the trade deficit will slip out of the control of the policy-makers.
b. Manufacturing in the country will decline in favour of trading in partnership with the MNCs. The example of Godrej teaming up with Proctor and Gamble, Tatas with IBM and now Hindustan Lever gobbling up TOMCO are already before us. More such instances will come to the fore in the near future.
c. Agriculture is likely to grow less of food and more of export-ables. This will aggravate inflation.
d. Speculative capital will dominate as in the share market and in the foreign currency market. This capital will gain from devaluation and inflation. The economy will tend to get dollarised and the demand for gold aand silver will rise.
e. The encouragement to consumption of luxury goods is another example of this. Not only should waste be curbed, the consumption of energy needs to be curtailed since it is the biggest single item of import. Increased consumption of luxury goods will lead to more of energy imports and worsening of deficit directly and indirectly.

In conclusion, it can be argued that the opening up of the Indian economy at this stage of its development is injudicious. India has been granting concessions to foreign capital without being able to attract it. With the 1993-94 Union Budget, foreign capital will be able to sell its products in India as well as control Indian capital. This process is likely to intensify as the desperation of the policy-makers soars with rising current account deficit and/or inflation rate.

In many respects, the country is getting *Dunkelised*, without signing the Dunkel proposals. In effect, without putting the signatures to the document, India has become almost the first country to abide by the Dunkel proposals. Globalisation under duress is giving Indians the worst of all possible worlds.

IMPRESSIONS

Can I Break My Castle?

AVIJIT PATHAK

What are we doing in the university? Like many of my colleagues I too have asked this question. And, particularly after the Ayodhya tragedy, this question is rather haunting me. This is indeed a disturbing question. At times, I tend to feel that all that we are doing in the university—our seminars and workshops, our publications and foreign trips—have already erected a big wall. This wall insulates us, separates us from the the rest of society.

We speak of reason and secularism. They speak of faith and religion. We wonder at their false consciousness. We advise them, teach them. And as eminent historians and sociologists, we write letters in the newspapers, appeal to them and ask them to restore communal amity and peace. But essentially no communication takes place. There is no dialogue anywhere. If we laught at their false consciousness, they too deny us as strangers, as arrogant intellectuals. They do not respect us. Naturally. Because we have never learned to respect them. Almost like colonial masters we have always sought to 'civilise' them. We have always lived in two different worlds.

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The other day I saw an article written by one of my students in a Calcutta weekly. My student—a young mind eager to evolve a meaning of existence—has alleged that as a student of Sociology all that he has been doing in the Jawaharlal Nehru University appears futile and meaningless. He is learning only theories, he is not going to the field, he is not communicating with anyone, he is living in an island! So, asks my student, is it worth-doing at all?

My student sharpened my routinised activities—the activities that, being an active participant of this gigantic academic industry, I have, however, learned to glorify.

The mosque was demolished. The country witnessed widespread communal violence. But how did we react? How did we intervene? We passed resolutions, condemned the fascists. And we organised seminars. We invited our own colleagues—secular, progressive collleagues. We celebrated Reason. We condemned Faith. But never did we dare to cross the wall. Never did we dare to listen to those strange voices—the voices of what we call irrationality. And they also did not listen to us. As intellectuals our separation from the wider community has become almost complete.

◆

ONE day after the tragic episode at Ayodhya, I happened to meet an old man. He is not an intellectual. He is ignorant of what I regard as my privilege—my familiarity with the discourses of Descartes and Marx. He is a Hindu! He has retired from the government service. And out of curiosity I asked him how he would react to Ayodhya. His reply surprised me, irritated me.

As a member of the intellectual community, I have heard what I have always wanted to hear. I have heard that reason makes things clear; reason makes one aware of one's secular/class identity, and reason makes one see religion as primarily the opium of the people. But this time before my own eyes I am seeing someone whose language is entirely different from mine, who sees himself as a Hindu, who refuses to forget the trauma of partition and who pleads for Hindu identity!

I began to realise that I did have nothing to communicate. I branded him as a fanatic. I remained silent. I considered it useless. I thought he would never understand my language. So I came back, came back to my university. I entered my own castle. I saw people of my own kind. I talked to them. I felt secure.

That is my world. Not solely mine. That is the world of my colleagues. That is what the intellectual world is all about.

Perhaps this cannot continue for ever. If I want my vocation to be meaningful, if I want my university to have an impact on the wider world, I must evolve a new method of communication.

How is it possible? To begin with, it is necessary for all of us to realise that intellectuals should not cut off their relationship with their community. The idioms they use should have their roots in their cultural traditions. In other words, they should try to see themselves as insiders, creative insiders, but by no means as outsiders. But this is precisely what is becoming increasingly difficult. If we look at the birth of the modern intelligentsia in India, we can easily relate it to the colonial historiography. In fact, we are still using their categories, imperial categories. We are seeing the world through their eyes. Our education is our worst tragedy. The West has become the significant Other. Even our 'non-Western' theories have to be approved by the West. As our minds remain fixed to Cambridge and Oxford, we seldom realise what is happening at Ayodhya and Varanasi, we 'interpret' it. We publish it. But seldom do we understand the real actors.

With this restless mind the other day I rediscovered Sri Aurobindo's *Foundations of Indian Culture* and *The Human Cycle.* It was quite a refreshing departure. I could see that a genius like Sri Aurobindo could understand India's history, use appropriate idioms and yet imagine a possibility free from all that the Advanis and the Singhals are doing!

I realise that my academic training has made me forget this thrid language—a language of dialogue and communication. In fact, how strange it is that earlier I have never felt the necessity of asking my students to read people like Sri Aurobindo. Instead, like my colleagues, I have asked my students to read only what the West prescribes—its 'Rightist' as well as 'Leftist' discourses!

Now, after the Ayodhya tragedy, perhaps for the first time I am realising that my internalised West is my worst tragedy. It has made me a stranger in my own homeland. And, as a stranger, no matter how secular and moralist I am., I cannot prevent Ayodhya because I cannot communicate with anyone.

But I want to communicate. I want to demolish the wall that has insulated my university from those 'superstituous' masses at Ayodhya and Aligarh, Varanasi and Moradabad. From my imagined paradise—from Oxford and Harvard—I want to come back, have a meaningful conversation with that young *kar sevak* from Andhra Pradesh, listen to his real constructed fears and fantasies, win his heart and then collectively create a new destiny—not Ayodhya, but a new India in which, despite being rooted in one's own community, one is continually growing up, celebrating togetherness and embracing the universe! ■

Restructuring the UNO

I.K. GUJRAL

President Yeltsin's forthright offer of support for India's seat in the UN Security Council, though welcome, does not imply much hope for our case. In a way the Russian President spelt out that politics of his diplomacy had reached a stage when he must revive multipolarity in world relations. Not in terms of the Cold War rivalries but in pointing out that the New World Order cannot be the one that George Bush had spelt out.

It is, of course, an irony, though one hopes it is a transitory one, that President Clinton's regime has not yet indicated its departure from the legacy of his predecessor.

In the context of the UNO and its restructuring the new Administration continues to harp on the same tune.

Warren Christopher, the new US Secretary of State, has said that while "... ... it is time for some reorganisation of the UN (Security Council) to bring it in keeping with modern realities (but) during the campaign President Clinton had envisaged the addition of Germany and Japan as Permanent Members of the Security Council..."

He did recognise that "there are other people who feel that they are entitled to a seat at the table". But to him "the current Permanent Members of the Security Council reflect realities of the World Power in 1945". Obviously, he believes that the power realities of 1945 have not changed even with end of the Cold War; otherwise he would not have deprecated the claims of India, Brazil, Nigeria and Egypt. The obvious qualification for him is that a country must be either a nuclear power or an economic power before it can aspire to sit around the hallowed table.

David Lange, a former Prime Minister of New Zealand, in a very perceptive article has said:

> ....the world now more than ever needs a strong international organisation. We need a United Nations which genuinely expresses the collective will, upholds common standards, and is willing and able to take concerted and consistent action wherever there is default in its resolutions and international law.

Lange believes,

> ....the shape and working of the new world order are becoming disconcertingly clear. The place of New Zealand, lightly populated, geographically remote, with no pretence of daunting military capacity, seems as ill-defined as that of India whose profile is the reverse of New Zealand's.

This is a forceful plea for revising the definition of power particularly when again to quote David Lange:

> .....this new world is a place of great insecurity. The end of the stand off between the two great power blocs has unleashed forces of nationalism, ethinicity religious zealotry and outright anarchy which were formerly kept in check by tyranny, oppression and influence.

Like many other perceptive thinkers he points out that the "American attack on Iraqi forces in relief of Kuwait was as much in accord with international law as its invasion of Panama was in breach of it". It is this selective use of the UN fora that causes allround anxiety. A stage has been clearly reached when the Security Council often manifests pliability at the dictates of Washington. This is dangerous since the American perception of its own national interests can be at variance with the interests of some others. George Bush's brazen attack on the Iraqi installations a few days prior to his exit is a quotable example. While the UNO has violently insisted on preserving the sanctity of 'no-fly-zones' in Iraq it has helplessly watched when the Bosnian 'no-fly-zone' is regularly impinged.

The subservience of the UNO to Washington is becoming increasingly manifest particularly when it has to depend a great deal on doles of the rich nations. Its budgets have been so managed (read manipulated) that the organisation is ever in a state of insolvency and hence the prospects of far-reaching changes are dim. When the USA is asking for granting permanent seats to Germany and Japan, it is formalising the power of G-7 that is already determining the shape of the world's economy.

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IN the meantime the Security Council, whatever its anatomy, will continue to be the nerve-centre. India has a vital interest in its democratisation. But it should in no way dilute our attention from the economic wings of the UNO where our fate and future, as that of the entire Third World, are determined.

The UNDP in a recently published "Human Development Report 1992" has shown maldistribution of global income.

Says the Report:

> The richest 20 per cent of the world's population receives 82.7 per cent of total world income while the poorest 20 per cent receive only 1.4 per cent.
> The startling events of the past two years have led to the end of the world divided between East and West and to a new age of political and economic freedom.

All this may be correct but,

> ...we still live in the world of unequal opportunities ...immigration policies, trade barriers and international debt contribute to the continuing disparity between rich and poor nations...

The zealots of globalisation must take note of the irony that while national markets are opening, global markets remain restricted. Where can developing nations sell their products unless global markets are also freed of protectionist restraints?

The Report proceeds to forthrightly say:

> Tariff and non-tariff trade barriers imposed by industrial countries cost developing countries about $ 40 billion a year in lost export revenues. Immigration laws block the flow of unemployed or under-employed to industrial countries where job opportunities could sufficiently increase the current $ 25 billion a year in worker remittances.

It is neither a news nor an empty rhetoric when the Mahbubul Haq Commission says that unless "the world community strengthens its support to global human development there can be very little hope even when there is much talk of creating a single, unified, global system. ..."

The Third World finds itself confronted with a daunting reality where "... the speed and efficiency of the international money markets, the autonomy and reach of the multinational corporations, the dominance of the group of rich nations over the ever expanding flows of international trade". These trends and movements have gone a long way to undermine economic authority of nation states and their agendas for promotion of human development.

As I have pointed out in the earlier part of the article, it is no use living in the illusion that a seat in the Security Council will by itself end our servitude when the "international economic decision-making is dispersed over numerous institutions and forums (that are) dominated by the rich countries, leaving developing countries powerless and vulnerable".

The global economy is dominated by the Group of Seven nations that has only 12 per cent of the world population.

Some years back the NAM had constituted a Group of Fifteen nations (G-15) to see if some alternative strategy of development could be evolved or a worthwhile agenda for discussion with the G-7 could be worked out. The results so far have been disappointing.

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THE IMF is the new God that our policy-makers ask us to worship. The Fund was created to "... maintain monetary stability and allow payments of imbalances to be resolved in an equitable and controlled fashion...." But the Fund is in no position to "exert any authority over the rich industrialised nations..."

Our own experience shows that while we need the IMF, its role, in the last analysis, has generated more problems by imposing "conditionalities" that are generally monitorist and deflationary, obliging governments to curtail overall demand. These cutbacks reduce consumption, investment and employment and stifle economic growth where the emphasis should have been on adjustment and growth that would promote production for exports and internal consumption. We are forced to move in the reverse direction.

What is true of the IMF is even more valid in the case of World Bank. Initially it too was set up to transfer savings of the rich to the poor and to encourage development. "In fact it has done little to recycle surpluses to deficit nations." The quoted figures testify that in 1990-91 alone out of $ 150 billion, poor countries received only $ 500 million.

The GATT—as we have seen in the case of Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations—is bogged down by the industrial countries on the question of agricultural subsidies and protection of their intellectual properties. In the meantime pressures on poor are increased. Arthur Dunkel's approach and outlook is already causing anxiety.

All in all, one is sad to see that the "United Nations system has so far played only a peripherial role in the global economic management". And "when it comes to economic issues, the powerful industrial countries have been reluctant to use the UN forum because each member-state has an equal vote...". Therefore, they have used the IMF, World Bank and other

(Continued on page 32)

BJP's Ideological Puzzle

Integral Humanism: Its Real Import

DEBASHIS CHAKRAVARTY

The idea of 'integral humanism' has been mooted by the BJP theoreticians as an alternative to Western culture. After tacitly equating Indian culture with *Hindutva*, the BJP says that the basic characteristic of Indian culture is a holistic approach to man and his activities in life and society, as well as to the concurrent development of his body, mind, soul and intellect.

According to the BJP propagandists, Western culture has alwys overemphasised one of these to the exclusion of others. Some of the Western thinkers have stressed the functions of the mind and intellect, others those of the body., And they place Marxism in the second category. Indian culture has always regarded the role and function of each of these aspects in an integral whole with a balanced approach and here man is the focus of all development. Hence, it is 'integral humanism'.

Having already brought the canvas of Indian culture down to the narrow paradigm of *Hindutva*, the BJP speaks of the 'integrative and holistic approach to life and society' as expounded by the late Pandit Deendayal Upadhayay; that is, 'integral humanism'. Since the BJP has accepted the explanation of Pandit Upadhyaya on this question, his arguments should be analysed to examine the relevance of the concept in modern times.

What strikes one most after reading *'Integral Humanism'* of Pandit Upadhyaya is its simplistic "integration" of all the divergent social, political and philosophical views of the Western countries of a time-span of more than two thousand years under a common noun "West" with a corresponding pronoun "they" and a similar "integration" of all the divergent cross-currents of opinions of the Indian thinkers of a similar time span into an indivisible "Indian culture" to be suitably replaced by the pronoun "we".

Among the Western philosophers, some stood for materialism, some for absolute idealism, some for agnosticism and still some others for mysticism or speculative views. None of these systems of views can be separately extolled as "integral". These philosophies and theories were "integral" in the sense that each of the corresponding thinkers wanted to provide an overall idea about how man and his society, the political structure, the sense of rights and duties should be according to their perceptions of the contemporary problems and the social conditions. One can differ with or refute any or all of them. But one cannot simply club them together, and brand them as 'Western', and then reject them because of the label.

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Similarly, there is no single homogenous entity called 'Indian thinking'. The four Vedas and the Vedantas (Upanishadas and Gita) do not represent the same school of thought. Many scholars like Kanad, Kapil, Charvak stood for materialism and atheism. Gautam Buddha, Mahavir Jain went against Vedic and Brahminical tradition and fought against casteism and untouchability. Kabir, Guru Nanak, and Chaitanyadev also preached totally non-Vedic anti-Brahmin monotheistic religions. Interpretations of Vedanta varied between Rammohun and Vivekananda. Interpretations of Gita were different with Vivekananda, Tilak, Gandhi and Aurobindo. Vidyasagar, Sarat Chandra and Bhagat Singh considered the entire fabric of idealist Hindu philosophy (Vedanta, Sankhya, etc.) to be false, brain-befuddling systems.

Rabindranath did not see eye to eye with Gandhi on the divine existence in human life although both of them were believers. Some sects of Hinduism believe in monotheism, and view God as an abstract supreme rational being, while most of the Hindus believe in polytheism, idolatry and a pantheon of anthropomorphic gods and goddesses. Again each of these widely varying schools of thought—believers, atheists, agnostics, materialists, dualists, monists—has its own viewpoints about human life, psyche, soul, education, marriage, occupation, morality, etc.

Thus, one cannot club all of them together and accept as our own guiding lights.

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IT is, therefore, evident that on the one hand there is no substance in qualifying Indian thinking as 'integral' in contrast with Western thinking; on the other it is absolutely meaningless to accept a particular school of thought simply because it is 'integral', for every such thought is 'integral' in its own way. There must be other more specific qualifications to justify our choice.

Similarly, it can be shown that humanism is a broad and distinct category having a historicity of its own which cannot be attached to any ideology or philosophy just like coupling a goods wagon with an engine. Although all great minds of the world in their respective ages and countries have taken the welfare of mankind as the focus of all their activities, religious, social, political, etc., their ideas did not represent humanism. Humanitarians they were no doubt, but so long as man's ideas remained within the ambit of a religio-spiritualist system, he considered himself a temporary transient being created and circulated through the world (once in Christianity and Islam, millions of times according to Buddhist and Hindu beliefs) by an almighty God. If the various schools of spiritualism in India and Western countries are compared, one may get ample evidence of the point. Particularly when this was carried to an extreme by the Upanishadic belief in *karmavad* and an individual man was hardly accorded any independence in his decision and action.

It was only during the Renaissance, when mankind awoke up from the millenia-long slumber under feudalism and his intellect revolted against the fetters of absolutism, when the era of capitalism dawned in history that man was able to extricate his existence from the idealist umbilical-cord with the so-called divine origin. Growth of free trade, freedom in choice of profession, liberation of the serfs necessitated advances in science and technology, enlightenment of the masses, change in the outlook of man. It was in such a situation that man challenged religious orthodoxy, the authority of the Church and priesthood, and in extreme cases even the veracity of the existence of God. On the one hand he realised that 'Man is the architect of his fate'. On the other he demanded freedom and scope to be the architect, and ultimately a social condition where this was realisable. What man lost in the demolition of the geocentric concept of the Universe cherishing the idea that God had placed man and his earth at the centre of the Universe was more than compensated by this new awareness of man's role in his life. This new outlook of man about himself, of his role in this world, his rights and duties, divorced from any religious ecclesiastical tutelage, was called humanism.

Does India present a different picture in this regard? Was there such a concept of humanism based on individual freedom in earlier period and older scriptures in India? No. However much it may injure the nostalgic sentiment of the BJP theoreticians, there was no such thing. The Vedanta of Shankar, of which they are so proud, denied not only man's independent role, but even the very reality of man, his life, his body, his existence and of this world. An integrated Nihilism, one may say! In Gita, which is another venerated script of the upper caste Hindus, Krishna showed Arjun that he had no choice but to fight and kill, for, what Arjun thought he would have to do and felt personally responsible for, was already got done by the governor of this world. And what Manu legislated for the Shudras and the women as their code of life, is not only inhuman but barbarous from the modern humanist point of view.

Again, it was only during the course of the growth of the Indian Renaissance and thereafter the anti-British national movement, that despite all these strictures in the old scriptures, man's individual role was asserted. Even Vivekananda, who wanted to establish the superiority of Hinduism, appealed to the individual intiative of the people and for that purpose urged them fervently to forget the scriptures for the time being. Rammohun, Vidyasagar, Phuley, Meghani, Bharati, Sarat Chandra, Prem Chand—whoever worked for the awakening of our nation—appealed to the people to take active interest and initiative in reforming social conditions, creating new norms and values to make them humane, and to change their outlook for that purpose.

If one has to trace the birth of humanism as an idea in Indian history, one has to look at this glorious chapter in it. It is this humanism of that time that looked upon man not in terms of his birth, family, caste, religion, language, sex, but measured a man in terms of his work and worth. 'Man is the measure of everything.' If casteism, religious beliefs and rituals, sex inequality do not stand up to this measure, then they must be changed in accordance with the aspirations of man and the needs of the times. If we deny this history and seek an 'ideal' or 'golden' humanism in those very scriptures, the contention and authority of which were instruments in the suppression of man for more than two thousand years, then the very content of the BJP's 'humanism' will be seriously doubted by those to whom it is addressed. ■

Prospects of Panchayati Raj

G.S. BHARGAVA

What is the difference between panchayat raj and panchayati raj? Plenty, although it was not much noticed when Parliament virtually rushed through the Constitution (72nd Amendment) Bill at the fag end of its winter session last year. According to S.K. Dey, Nehru opted for the expression "panchayati raj" which is a system as distinct from the geographical connotation of panchayat, representing the village republic of ancient times. Nehru was not enamoured of the idea that sovereignty should be conferred on the villages to function as mini republics, existing by themselves. B.R. Ambedkar had openly spoken against the village republics of yore denouncing them as cesspools of localism and oppression.

He was not far wrong considering the injustice which the upper castes have been heaping on persons condemned to inferior birth and the treatment generally meted out to women. The countervailing forces against such social and gender tyranny are likely to be inadequate in small village conglomerations. But the remedy does not lie in centralised government, that too, in a country of India's size and cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity.

Panchayati raj, on the other hand, is self-government with power vested in elected bodies at the village and district levels to ensure almost direct participation of the electors in the administration. The directive principle enshrined in Article 40 of the Constitution has laid down that village panachayats should be established with powers to function as "units of self-government". The first steps in that direction were taken in the early 1950s in the wake of the introduction of the Community Development Programme. The idea was that integrated grassroot level development should be entrusted to the village bodies instead of being imposed from the top.

The experiment caught on with a network of panchayats established practically all over the country including the North-East. It seemed a pattern of nation-building from the village level was emerging.

But the basic drawback was in the approach that the village-level and other panchayats were mere instruments of development as planned at the top. With centralised national planning very much in vogue, they were seen as organs of national agencies to implement schemes prepared by experts in Delhi. Before independence too there were such experiments largely prompted by considerations of administrative convenience. The Firka Development Scheme of T. Prakasam in the undivided Madras Presidency and D.P. Mishra's panchayat plan of 1939 in what was then C.P. and Berar were examples of this kind. But they did not envisage self-government at the micro level.

The Balwantrai Mehta Committee of the 1950s also did not perceive the panchayat raj instiutions as units of self-government, although by providing for adult franchise elections for the village panchayats and by vesting them with financial resources it breathed life into the system. But during his brief tenure of Chief Ministership of Gujarat, Balwantrai Mehta had made the panchayats come alive in the State by entrusting them with both planning and execution of schemes at the district level and by putting the elected head of the zilla parishad above the district collector in matters of development. So did Yeshwantrao Chavan in Maharashtra, which incidentally provided a power base for him and his party.

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EVEN the attenuated scheme of panchayat raj did not last beyond the 1960s. Centralisation became the watch-word during Mrs Gandhi's regime. A theory grew that only the Central Government with immense administrative talent at its command would be able to speed up development at all levels if it possessed the requisite political will which Mrs Gandhi was considered to have in abundance. Whether it was "*garibi hatao*" in amorphous terms or more definite schemes of rural development, the Centre would initiate the effort with a fanfare of publicity and allot funds. The rest was taken for granted.

At the ground level, many panchayats had become cockpits of political rivalry, both inter-party and intra-party. If the so-called High command could pick and choose Chief Ministers and key party functionaries, the State satraps could similarly play favourites at the district level and below.

Meanwhile, a tendency also developed that civil servants with their modern outlook and amassed administrative experience were better instruments of development. They knew what needed to be done and how it should be done. A glaring instance was the scheme launched in Andhra Pradesh under a Congress Government establishing district development boards with the district collector as the chairman and the zilla parishad chairman as its only other member to implement Centrally sponsored schemes. The zilla parishads and gram panchayats, wherever they still existed, withered on the vine. Very often, the former were superseded or their elections repeatedly postponed in some cases for 16 years.

This was the situation in the late 1970s and early 1980s when the advent of non-Congress-I Governments in West Bengal, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh brought the panchayats back into focus. First and foremost, five-yearly elections to the panchayat bodies have been made obligatory. Three such elections were held in West Bengal where the United Front Government has been in office since 1977, while the successive Congress-I Governments in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh have put the clock back.

Secondly, provision was made for compulsory representation for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women. The representation of the SCs and STs has been more than proportionate in West Bengal but women account for about 15 per cent only. Now, reservation of one-third of the seats for women has been provided for. Reservation has become a bad word because of the 1990 fiery agitation against it by the higher castes. But it will be clear that without such a safeguard, the so-called creamy layer notwithstanding, the panchayat bodies can be distorted into tools of social tyranny. The danger was less acute in West Bengal because of the large-scale land redistribution which preceded the organisation of panchayats.

Wisely, both the provisions for compulsory periodical elections and statutory representation for the SC, the STs and women is made in the Constitution (72nd Amendment) Act. There was much controversy about the method of election of the heads of the different panchayat bodies. It was argued that direct election was the key to democracy at the grassroots level. But when the village panchayat itself is directly elected, the choice of the chairperson by a similar method can lead to needless conflict by introducing an element of the presidential system.

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THE 1990 Bill prepared by the late Dinesh Goswami of the National Front Government had left it to the concerned State legislatures to decide the system of election of the chairperson at all levels. So did the draft of the present legislation. But the joint select committee, in its wisdom, changed it to direct election at the village level which did not pass muster with Parliament. Now it will be for the concerned State legislatures to choose between direct and indirect election at the village level, while at the district and intermediary levels it will be indirect.

Another unhealthy element was keeping it open for a State legislature to load the higher-level panchayats with the State and Central legislators of the area, with voting rights to boot. The 1990 Bill did not have such a provision while the select committee added members of the Rajya Sabha and the legislative council to those of the Lok Sabha and the legislative assembly for possible inclusion. It was said that in the pre-United Front days in West Bengal of the 127 members of the zilla parishad in the 24-Parganas 48 were MPs and MLAs.

A more basic lacuna in the law is the needless change introduced by the select committee with the argument that the gram sabha consisting of all electors in a village can have only functions to perform and no powers to exercise. This negates the principle of sovereign right of the people not merely to choose their representatives but also to hold them to account. It will be no big stride towards participatory democracy if the people can elect, in addition to MPs and MLAs, panchayat members periodically.

The Dinesh Goswami Bill vested the gram sabha with "such powers at the village level as the State legislature may, by law, provide". There was rightly no mention of functions because they flowed from powers. The Karnataka law on the subject, enacted by the Hegde Government, laid down that the gram sabha would meet twice a year and consider initiation and implementation of different development programmes, including education. In West Bengal, the gram sabhas review the record of the panchayats. The legislation, as finally adopted by Parliament, somewhat salvaged the situation by tacking powers to the functions of the gram sabhas.

Reinforcing the flawed approach, the new legislation describes the responsibilities to be vested in the panchayat with a 29 items list culled from the States list in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution as the new Eleventh Schedule, leaving out law and order. In the circumstances, calling the panchayat a unit of self-government is a misnomer. It will merely be an instrument for carrying out development schemes. The 1990 Bill had the saving grace of leaving the position vague by merely asking the State legislature to "endow" the local authorities with "such powers and authority as may be necessary" without listing the subjects.

It is not that there is a prospect in the near future of devolution of executive power to the district and below. But the constitutional amendments in respect of the North-Eastern States, including the provision for creation of an autonomous territory in the hill districts of North Cachar and Karbi Anglong in Assam and the formation of the Darjeeling Hills District Council in West Bengal show the shape of things to come ultimately.

Veteran administrators of the stature of Nirmal Mukerjee (who had held the highest official post of Cabinet Secretary of the Union Government) have come round to the view that establishment of district governments is necessary not only to augment development but to invigorate the administration as well. Nehru himself regarded decentralisation as a synonym of democracy.

In the circumstances when Parliament by law seeks to create new tiers of the political set-up why should it circumscribe them by "endowing" them with only a semblance of authority? In fact, such devolution of power is necessary if incipient fascism in the country is to be contained. Unleash the power of the people against the merchants of intolerance and prejudice and see the result: a stronger and more vibrant India. ■

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India-Policy of West at Critical Juncture

BATUK VORA

The author, a former MLA of Gujarat now based in California, is a free-lancer who has sent this article from the US to enable the Mainstream *readers to get an idea of the complex processes underway in the Western nations, particularly the US, as a result of the surge of the* Hindutva *forces in the aftermath of Ayodhya (December 6, 1992).*

—Editor

A section of the Western "experts" on South Asia inside and outside the Clinton Administration is keeping its option open for an eventuality of the BJP capturing Central power in India. The BJP's strong posture against Islam is taken by them as a convenient weapon against the long-drawn confrontation of the United States against Islamic fundamentalism.

Some Clinton advisors are reported to have suggested even holding off the US pressure on India for denuclearisation, by saying that such a pressure could overturn the balance of power in that part of the world. But this kind of analysis is seen in some behind-the-curtain corridors. Mostly, a deep sense of sympathy for the Indian secular image prevails.

If an average Indian abroad is asked what was the best way to handle the communal menace in the Indian subcontinent, he or she would come out clearly with a sense of deep agony and an advice to handle it by determined confrontation. Prof Amartya Sen, the noted economist at Harvard, reflected the voice of such an average person when he expressed this sentiment during his Nehru lecture at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom.

It was in fact following a spate of protest demonstrations by both secular Hindus and Muslims in the major cities of the Western nations against the communal forces in India the BJP Vice-President, Sikander Bakht, was sent by the BJP leadership on a special four-nation trip to "explain" away their "position" in the aftermath of the Ayodhya event. He had to deny the Western media's insinuation that by sending a Muslim to explain the party's role, the BJP was using a ploy to show the secular face of the party. Bakht had to assert again and again in a defensive way that the "BJP is not a Hindu communal organisation".

Amartya Sen, on the other hand, lashed out at those like the Shiv Sena for exploiting obscure religious matters. He said groups like it had thrived in India on "appeasement by less determined political groups like the Congress and BJP". India was the third largest Muslim country in the world and the idea of seeing India just a Hindu country "is fairly bizarre in the face of that fact alone", he said.

Despite Bakht's protestations, the Indian community organised on secular lines in several urban centres under various names like Coalition Against Communalism, Concerned South Asians, Ekta, Indian Progressive Group, Indo-American Muslim Council, etc. Any attempt by the "neo-fascists" to change the secular character of India would result in further division of the country, according to their letter to the local media.

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ON the economic front, it was not surprising to see some major Americal companies postpoining their "ideas about the Indian market" for the time being. An executive of the cellular giant, Pactell, told this writer that their move to establish a manufacturing base in cellular, paging and communications fields had been postponed indefinitely due to the prevailing "unstable" conditions. Another executive of Western Digital, which is supplying semiconductors to India, said that their plan to open a subsidiary in India had been put off for now. There are many others going the same way, particularly when the road to Russian and Chinese markets was wide open, without any sign of impediments.

The fear that is becoming a big obstacle is that the "Indian subcontinent may be taken over by the ultranationalists". This was a screeching headline in the *Los Angeles Times* recently. Many critics here are drawing an apocalyptic picture of the BJP rule.

But there are also others, having "American security interests" in mind, who say that the "core of the BJP leadership remains moderate and tolerant, in the same way India does itself", as James Clad wrote in his analytical article. Clad, a well-known journalist who worked in

India for several years as the New Delhi correspondent of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, is currently a senior associate of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. It was Clad and some of his colleagues who had organised a reception in honour of L.K. Advani when he visited the US a year ago.

The *Hindutva* arguments and fervour have come here, though. A lot of fund is raised to help the banned organisations by their faithfuls. In that sense, the Indian community both in the United Kingdom and the United States-Canada is deeply divided on religious and political lines. Organised groups of Hindu fanatics spread a lot of literature and communal propaganda through telephone calls. Most moderate elements among the 'silent majority' secular people are, however, talking of "communal harmony" rather than challenging secularism.

But the most active among the now strongly secular-minded forces are South Asian professors and students based in New York, Harvard, Colombia, Cambridge, Oxford, Berkeley, Standford, University of California in Irvine and Los Angeles.

India as a whole stands at a critical juncture in the international arena. Much will depend on the direction it takes in the near future. Many eyes are fixed on it. ■

South Africa in Transition

SADHAN MUKHERJEE

After 81 years of struggle, great sacrifice and suffering, the African National Congress (ANC) is close to realising its goal of a South Africa which "belongs to all who live in it, Black and White", as its Freedom Charter in 1955 spelt out. The aim set out was that of a democratic state based on the will of all people and the rights of every individual. South Africa is poised on the threshold of that transformation.

The 'International Solidarity Conference—From Apartheid to Peace, Democracy and Development'—organised by the ANC in Johannesburg on February 19-21—provided a world platform to the ANC not only to urge for greater solidarity at this point of time but also to unveil its scheme of building precisely that South Africa it has been all along striving for. Attended by 644 international representatives and 253 South Africans representing 106 organisations, this was the biggest ever world gathering the ANC had organised. It provided a measure of the skill and ability it has acquired since it was unbanned on February 2, 1990.

This year marks the centenary of Mahatma Gandhi's arrival in Durban in the Natal province of South Africa. He was kicked out of the train at Pietermaritzburg by the White supremacists, an action that set off a chain of events boosting the struggle against apartheid. This struggle has since grown a million times. As Oliver Tambo, the ANC Chairperson, pointed out at the conference: "When India spoke at the United Nations against apartheid at the end of the 1940s she alone stood up to speak." Today, apartheid, a crime against humanity, is on its last legs.

The ANC is the biggest of all the forward-looking forces in South Africa. It is an umbrella organisation covering all people—Blacks, Whites, Coloureds and Indians, it is not a party as such though it is a combination of political parties and some mass organisations. However, it is not the sole force to stake a claim to rule democratic South Africa. There are many others—from extreme Left to extreme Right—vying for positions and jockeying for power.

There is a tremendous ongoing violence in South Africa that can rip apart its body politic. It is this violent South Africa that cries out for peace. It is accepted by all that the policy of the ANC can prevent the country from a slippage into anarchy and division. The ANC President, Nelson Mandela, found it expedient to warn of an incipient counter-revolution that is being experienced, and stresss: "After so much sacrifice by so many, we have the obligation to prevent disintegration into a Yugoslavia."

Immersed in a conflict within for over three centuries, South Africa needs peace perhaps more than any other country. And the violence is not confined to colonial expansion, racial clashes and killings. Many have become brutalised from the cruelty of years on end. There is violence along political lines even within the same community.

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THOUGH the National Peace Accord, aimed at ending violence, was signed on September 14, 1991, there is a good deal of lawlessness everywhere. No one dares to move alone in a city like Johannesburg after sunset. Crimes take place even in broad daylight. Mugging is widespread and tourists are easy targets. Train violence, between Soweto and Johannesburg in particular, is rampant and commuters are helpless victims. The average monthly number of killings on train was 25 or more during August to November last year; it was slowed down since—nine in December, 12 in January and five last month. As many as 107 people died in political violence in Natal in January, of them 36 in the Durban area alone and 31 in the South Coast. West of Pretoria, two Whites shot three Blacks from a running car some days ago. In Natal, seven African children have been killed on March 3, followed by 10 men on March 5.

Economic crimes and wanton corruption are common. The abysmal poverty and violence make many individuals crime-prone. But it is not the deprived ones alone. The report of the Accountant General placed before Parliament on February 22 accused the government of mis-spending. The six self-governing territories and four nominally independent homelands are paid 12 billion rands (4 billion dollars) a year to survive. But much of the money is misused and pocketed.

Transport is government owned and there are reports of misuse of funds running into hundreds of millions of rands. A R 241 million computer centre in Verwoerdburg is hardly used. The Department of Development Aid wasted huge funds including R 14.5 million on unused and abandoned toilets. Funds have been pocketed by private persons from the Department of Education and Training as well as through upliftment projects.

Many Ministers of the South African Government, including the Finance Minister, stay in their own homes instead of official residences. They get a huge subsidy as "compensation" for this. Last year it amounted to three million rands. Massive sums of money are being spent on arms including missile manufacture, nuclear technology (the latest is the enriched uranium deal under negotiation with Russia), the purchase of a naval supply ship from the Russian navy and training aircraft from neutral Switzerland evoking strong protest in the UN as being flagrant violation of the sanctions. There are many economic deals that carry largescale kickbacks.

There are over seven million people (mostly Africans) without jobs from among roughly 15 million economically active population. The GNP in 1992 grew only by 0.5 per cent. The White minority which has been the beneficiary of the immense riches of South Africa (a vast country with massive plains with fertile soil and every mineral except oil) is now finding its prosperity halted or even sliding downhill. Despite some covert violations, the sanctions are holding and even the wealthy Whites now feel the crunch. The economy is in a shambles.

The ANC is not unconcerned about the economic crisis and has proposed lifting of the sanctions step by step commensurate with each stage of the democratic advance. A democratic South Africa is the only way out of the impasse and as events have amply demonstrated, it cannot be achieved by violent means. It has to be a peaceful transition but that is not an easy task.

After February 1990, the ANC and other unbanned organisations declared to approach the government for talks. In August 1990 all armed action and related activities were ceased by the ANC. Many a bilateral and multilateral discussion took place between the ANC and other political forces.

The ruling National Party has not yet abrogated apartheid or denounced it. It only found apartheid to be unworkable. Thus the psychology and intention that worked behind it are still too fresh to be totally ignored. The agony and the ecstasy of years, as it were, do not vanish in a wink. The understanding between the government of F.W. de Klerk and the ANC, the Inkatha Freedom Party, the South African Communist Party, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, and some other political forces could not have taken into account many of the hurdles on the path to democracy.

However, many apartheid laws like the Group Areas Act which placed people in designated and separate areas according to the colour of their skin, the Population Registration Act, etc., and regulations on marriage and cohabitation which prohibited contacts between Whites and non-Whites have since been withdrawn and new laws like right to land ownership by all South Africans have been introduced. There is also a growing realisation among the Whites of the inevitability of having a coalition government with the Africans.

The first plenary of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) was held on December 20-21, 1991 in which the ANC and 18 other forces took part. It was an important landmark "in our long march to freedom", as the ANC Deputy Secretary-General, Jacob Zuma, put it. But the CODESA process broke down after its second plenary in May 1992. A series of bilateral discussions and finally a summit meeting between Mandela and de Klerk in September 1992 setting out a Record of Understanding put the negotiations back on track. The advance has not been easy and the multiparty Negotiations Planning Conference restarted the process on March 5, 1993.

While South Africa slowly ambles towards democracy, the ANC is urging the international community to keep up the pressure on the White minority government. Sanctions must remain in place, it underlined; on nuclear items, oil and arms until an interim Government of National Unity is set up. Other sanctions on diplomatic relations, gold coins, trade and trade credits, new investment, loans and other financial links may be lifted after the agreed date of elections is announced, and a Transitional Executive Council, independent electoral and media commissions are established as well as the enactment or the Transition to Democracy Act takes place.

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THE talks at the Negotiations Planning Conference have not been easy either. The ANC wants the CODESA to be expanded and restructured to bring in new forces. The Inkatha Freedom Party still insists on their territorial independence and so do some of the so-called homelands. The National Party also seems to prefer dilution of central power and grant of more regional autonomy to control the effective role of a national force.

Such fissiparous demands could, however, divide the country. President de Klerk's government, and his party are also trying to wean away Indian and Coloured voters from the African voters. In a dramatic move, at the time of the international conference, President de Klerk reconstituted his Cabinet by retiring five White Ministers and appointing one Indian and two Coloured Ministers in a bid to win votes from these sectors of the electorate.

There were other moves as well. On February 12 the press was told that the ANC had agreed to share power with the National Party and form a Government of National Unity for "governing the country for five years". This was not true and was aimed at creating confusion and alienating other parties from the ANC and further enraging the Inkatha leader, Buthelezi. Both President de Klerk and ANC President Mandela had to publicly denounce the report and reaffirm that the final agreement would be reached only at the multiparty conference.

The biggest task now is to get the Transitional Executive Council and the two independent commissions in place and prepare for free and fair elections. The composition of these of these bodies involves a lot of hard bargaining. The elections will bring into existence a Constituent Assembly and an Interim Government of National Unity. The ANC does not want to exclude anyone except that there must be at least five per cent voter support behind any claimant. Seats will be allocated, both in the Constituent Assembly and in the government, on the basis of proportional representation.

The ANC needs a wide range of assistance, from finance to manpower training. The estimated 18 million African voters of South Africa as well as the majority of Coloured and Indian voters never voted before. They must be educated on how to vote. Also, the ANC requires all sorts of electoral material, equipment, transport and media expertise to put its electoral machinery in place and run it to victory. The ANC has estimated it needs at least $ 50 million. The fund drive is on. World heavyweight boxing champion, Riddick Bowe, who was present at the conference, presented Mandela a pair of boxing gloves, a dressing gown and a contribution of $ 100,000. More help has started to arrive but it is as yet a long way to go.

However, everything depends on the multiparty talks and the political acumen of the participants to come to a workable understanding for the future of South Africa. A democratic, non-racial, non-sexist South Africa could not only help itself but also the world. Such a South Africa could bring about an end to the war and destruction that go on in the region and assist all peoples of Southern Africa to live in peace and freedom, and to jointly engage in the urgent task of reconstruction and equitable development for the benefit of all peoples. ■

India-Russia: Demise of Special Relationship

ASHUTOSH

Given the chance, if the Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, and the Indian Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao, are asked, 'Will you please like to govern your respective countries in the same circumstances again?' it is most probable that answer will be a big 'No'. Boris Yeltsin is trying to administer Russia about which he has prayed in one of his meetings: 'Under no circumstances, God help us, should there be an outbreak of civil war in our society.' The Russian Vice-President Rutskoi declared: 'Our society is overloaded with confrontation.' And not long ago the erstwhile President and ex-General Secretary of the former Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, has predicted that 'Russia faces a social explosion'.

At this time the popularity of the hero of the August Revolution (1991) has dipped to an all-time low. According to one survey, Yeltsin's present approval rating is somewhere around 22 per cent. Russians are fed up with his 'shock-therapy' and soaring inflation (22 per cent) and mass unemployment. Corruption is endemic and industrial output has been cut to half.

In the same way his counterpart Narasimha Rao's image is also shattered in the post-mosque demolition era of the Indian polity. December 6, 1992 has placed him in a tight spot; overnight his positive points have turned negative. Shrewd silence became disastrously indecisive and his loss of will to govern was more than evident at a time when the forecast is that India is heading for a prospective civil war. He was seen compromising with the communal forces at the national level and as a philosopher king indulging in village level politics within the Congress party. Though temporarily inflation is in check but the division of the society along community, caste and regional lines is complete. So at this crucial juncture of history when the supreme leaders of the time-tested friends—Russia (as the successor of the USSR) and India—met in New Delhi for three days it was expected that something dramatic will emerge. Expectations were also high in the background of the old saying 'a friend in need is a friend indeed'. No doubt history tried to repeat itself, but in a different way. The summit of the two leaders proved to be satisfactory in the mould of the politics of the new age where idealism has given way to pragmatis, where he old model of classical diplomacy, that is, nothing is permanent in international politics, neither friends nor foes, only national interest, is the in thing. In a way history has taken a full circle. In this context signing of around ten agreements in an achievement—specially that relating to rupee-rouble parity, and the defence accords. But one question remained unanswered: why, in this period of turmoil, Russia and India could not forge a special relationship on the lines of the 1971 Soviet-Indian Peace, Cooperation and Friendship Treaty?

The world has metamorphosed itself in such a way in the last three years, particularly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, that it is impossible to operate with the old logic. The post-World War period was marked by Cold War between the two global powers, that is, the Soviet Union and the United States of America. It started as an ideological battle between the two, the Soviet Union representing communism and the USA capitalism. But the emergence of Nikita Khrushchev put the ideological content into the background and the ego of the two nations became primary. This was evident in the deteriorating Sino-Soviet relationship in the late fifties and improvement in Sino-American relationship, thanks to the 'shuttle-diplomacy' of the legendary Henry Kissinger in the late sixties.

Globalisation of national interest made it imperative for both the superpowers to hunt for external friends worldwide. Partly due to ideological proximity and partly because of historical legacy, India and the USSR came close to each other despite the initial apprehensions on the part of the Soviet leaders in the forties. This ultimately blossomed into a special relationship in 1971.

But with the developing strains and cracks in Soviet society and state apparatus it became increasingly difficult for the Soviet ruling elite to carry on the conflict between the superpowers. The economy was already in a shambles when Gorbachev took over. He realised that if the Soviet Union had to survive as a nation it has to say goodbye to the old methods and evolve new alphabets for the future. *Glasnost, perestroika,* democracy were the reflections of this new thinking. At the international level Gorbachev preferred disarmament to arms-control, creative cooperation to destructive confrontation, peaceful coexistence to elimination, peace to nuclear catastrophe. He was immediately heralded as the messiah of the new generation. Unfortunately his wonders could not work miracles at home and he remained more popular abroad than in the USSR. Finally he became a prisoner of his own creations and was blamed for the disintegration of the Soviet empire and then Yeltsin took over.

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DISAPPEARANCE of the Soviet Union and old, thinking made the very concept of 'special' relationship irrelevant in international relations. It is because of this reason that not much is heard about the NATO and the NAM. Of course the Warsaw Pact is finished. So why should one be surprised when Boris Yeltsin said during his India visit that 'we are only partners'? His further utterances—'we want to remove ideology from every part of this relationship...and we don't want to use the India card against world imperialism and Chinese hegemonism'—revealed the new thesis of the new politics.

Secondly, it should not be forgotten that the Soviet Union was quite old when it entered into special partnership with India whereas Russia has just been born. Its entire personality has yet to take a concrete form. It has to decide what role will suit it in world politics. Does it see itself as a future superpower or only as a prosperous, powerful, independent nation? In this hour of evolution its foreign policy has not taken any shape. As a matter of fact Russia wants enough space for timely accommodation. Guided by this calculation on the one hand Yeltsin said that Russia-China-India have a role in stabilising South Asia and in world peace; and on the other hand did not lose a second to emphasise: 'We want balance between East and West in our bilateral relations because we are originally a Euro-Asiatic community.'

Thirdly, through this visit Yeltsin wanted to convey to the rest of the world that not only at home but also at the international level Russia would not go back to the old communist path. The USSR is forgotten forever on all the fronts. The communist idealism has given way to crude realism. In its new birth Russia's consideration is not utopian abstraction but market, big and large, and capital in abundance. As one expert commended on Yeltsin's China visit, 'he is not looking at China as a model but as a market'. Before China he had been to South Korea.

Further, the Russian Foreign Ministry is dominated by West-oriented bureaucrats and Ministers whose attitude is not sympathetic towards the Third World. In their perception the Third World is an unnecessary burden. They club India with Third World countries and refuse to take notice of its independent existence.

Within the framework of the new realities let us accept the fact that in the given situation, special relationship is neither needed nor possible. It is a thing of the past. It should dawn on the Indian policy-makers that the time has come to abandon our habit of putting all the eggs in one basket. The sooner, the better. ■

GUJRAL: Restructuring the UNO

(Continued from page 20)

Bretton Woods Organisations where they have weighted advantages because of their wealth.

It is in this background that we must view the prospects of reforms in the UNO. What can be done to reform various institutions is well known. But how to bell the cat?

It is difficult to say if India's leadership can muster enough courage and vision to live upto Lange's expectations when he says:

> Many of us hope that India, a nation of great influence, untrammelled by alliances and with proud history since the Republic was founded of not being the cat's paw of any great power, might take a lead amongst the disempowered to radically reform the Charter of the UN by 1995. It is time to break out of the venality and institutionised hypocrisy which characterise current international diplomacy, and forge a world order where principles stand a fighting chance of surviving the challenges of money and power.

A CHINESE VIEW

Indo-Russian Relations Enter A New Era

LIN XIA

This article, carried in Beijing Review *(February 15-21, 1993), conveys the official Chinese position with regard to the visit to India by Boris Yeltsin, the Russian President. What is noteworthy is the article's conspicuous silence on Yeltsin's observation in his speech in the Central Hall of Indian Parliament on January 29, 1993 that "mutual trust, good neighbourliness, purely peaceful intentions of the three largest states in the world (India, China and Russia—*ed.*) could become a powerful stabilising factor not just in Asia but worldwide."*—Editor

Russian President Boris Yeltsin arrived in New Delhi late at night on January 27 and left for Moscow after completing his whirlwind visit on January 29. This was the first time a Russian President had visited India. The trip also marked the end of the special strategic relationship formed between the former Soviet Union and India during the Cold War period, as well as the beginning of a new chapter in bilateral relations that focus cooperation in the fields of economy, trade, and science and technology.

Speaking at a banquet in honour of Yeltsin, Indian President S.D. Sharma said that bilateral ties would require adjustments and modifications, taking into account the ongoing changes in the two countries. "India and Russia had a tradition of cooperation in international affairs and we look forward to working together to restructure our relations," he added.

Yeltsin said that relations with India, established on an "essentially new basis", are not directed against any third country.

On January 28, Yeltsin and Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao signed a new freiendship and cooperation treaty. India and the former Soviet Union signed a treaty in 1971 under which the two countries would hold consultations and adopt proper and effective measures when any of them was attacked. The new treaty has no such clause.

The new treaty stipulates that the two countries will refrain from taking any action which might affect mutual security interests. This is the first major document to guide Indo-Russian relations since Russia became an independent republic.

The leaders of the two countries also discussed the debt problem. Compromise was reached on the contentious rupee-rouble exchange rate mechanism during the talks between Yeltsin and Narasimha Rao. The two leaders agreed that the applicable exchange rate would be the January 1, 1990 rate (20.55 rupees for one Russian rouble) and that India's debt would be repaid in full within 45 years.

Under this agreement, India's debt to Russia, which now stands at 38 billion Indian rupees, will be reduced by 32 per cent.

The former Soviet Union had provided India with weapons and equipment. About 70 per cent of India's military equipment came from the Soviet Union, and India remains the main purchaser of Russian weapons. During Yeltsin's visit, India and Russia signed an agreement on military technological cooperation. This agreement ensures a guaranteed supply of defence equipment including spare parts and services needed to maintain and modernise the frontline Russian armaments deployed in the Indian army, navy and air force.

The agreement also provides for the promotion of cooperation in defence science and technology, training,and exchange of personnel in joint research and development. This includes the transfer of technology for defence projects, and production for export to Third World countries.

Yeltsin reiterated that his country will not go back on its commitment to supplying cryogenic engines and related space technology to India, notwithstanding negative pressure from the United States.

Yeltsin and Indian leaders also signed bilateral agreements in the field of science and technology, and culture and information.

Yeltsin visited India under a greatly changed international situation. The source said that Russia sought to establish relations with India because the Western countries did not provide enough aid to Russia after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the Russian people appealed for the consolidation of Indo-Russian relations. In addition, India and Russia at one time had close political, economic and military relations and the two countries are looking forward to resuming these associations.

At a press conference Yeltsin said that he was satisfied with the outcome of his visit.

Yeltsin's trip to India was another important diplomatic action taken since his recent visits to China and the Republic of Korea. It was another sign that Russia is shifting its foreign policy focus from the West to Asia. ■

Beijing Review No.7, 1993
February 15-21, 1993

Japan's Chequebook Diplomacy

T.K. TANAHASHI and B.N. GHOSH

Like the mythical prince's first encounter with the sleeping beauty, the sight of Japan, to a stranger, appears to be full of sweet possibilities and potentialities. Since the period of 1950-60, Japan has been achieving, till recently, phenomenal economic growth. However, the growth of Japanese economy started with the Western technology, particularly of the United States. The new knowledge acquired by Japan was not merely a fruit of contemplation, it was also a high-powered instrument of rapid change of ideas which were profitably implemented in the sphere of production. Japan took advantage of the new technical prowess for quite a long time, but now its supremacy is on the wane. It seems knowledge, like everything else, also undergoes diminishing returns in terms of the material fruits it can yield.

Golden Age

Japan started increasing production in the early years to satisfy her growing domestic market, but it gradually improved its productivity and ability to produce for any market with enormous competitive advantage. The competitive advantage was derived mostly from superior technical competence. As an indirect offshoot of the growing technological competitiveness of Japan, the US began to lose its supremacy in the world market. Japan started the race as an imitator, but then subsequently began to innovate cheaper, better and newer products. Not only the United States but many other countries also started losing their markets to Japan, and the latter forged much ahead of others in the competitive rat race. The rest is history!

However, in course of time, every capitalist economy is bound to encounter the dance of trade cycles and the process of degenerate ageing. Japan is no exception. But it is gratifying to note that economic downturns have not been so severe in Japan as in the mature capitalist economies. In its own ingenious way, Japan has been able to devise a built-in mechanism which can quickly absorb the shock of market volatility.

The Phenomenon of Over-Heating

Be that as it may, Japan's growth momentum started slowing down since 1990. Its capital market began to shrink and it started disinvestment in many countries, particularly in Taiwan and Korea. The stock exchange has also recorded downward swings in recent years. The share prices of major business enterprises have plummeted substantially. Japan had to cut back domestic investment and make the necessary structural adjustments. But Japan's long-term economic policy does not favour reduction in the tempo of production operations. It is always exploring the possibilities of better alternative investment opportunities. Japan's new structural reform is being so streamlined that it may perhaps be possible for Japan to more than swamp out the contraction in investment in Taiwan and Korea by an increase in investment in the South-East Asian countries and also in China. Japan has realised the enormous potentiality of China both as an economic market and as a political peer. In fact, the Japanese economy which was overheated in 1990, seems of late to be shedding the excess heat. The basic cause for the overheating was perhaps the declining marginal efficiency of capital, growing operational costs and cut-throat competition in the world market. Japan is now busy making structural adjustments in regaining the lost paradise.

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The Chequebook Diplomacy

The issue of Japan's potentiality in diplomacy and leadership must be broached with reference to its present economic equilibrium and political balance-sheet. Needless to say, leadership requires, *inter alia,* two most essential attributes. A successful leader must have *followers* and also the inherent claim for *legitimacy*: the quality of being the moon among stars (*inter-stella luna minores*), or at least, the quality of *primus inter-pares* (the first among equals). However, unlike the United States, Japan has neither a band of followers nor has any lasting claim to legitimacy. Legitimacy comes out of the special or superior quality of the leader. Japan's only claim is its comparative advantages in the world production market. This attribute is neither the necessary nor sufficient condition to be a successful leader. Moreover, the economic position of Japan is now at stake and has already started going downhill. In spite of her spectacular economic performance, Japan does not have or cannot vouch for any exemplary model of economic growth or management.

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AS a matter fact, Japan's economy is almost a hostage to the US economy, and whatever is loss to the United

States is also a loss to Japan. Japan's economic policy is to sustain good relations with the United States. On the way of its being the prospective leader, Japan has two more constraints. *First,* Japan inherits a somewhat unpalatable *historical* legacy. Because of her past actions, Japan is not wanted by any Asian nation to be its leader. History has a peculiar way of reswitching our inherited conviction. And time is not always the best healer. *Second,* Japan's diplomacy is immature. Japan has no political power. Power is something through which one can make people do what they are not otherwise willing to do. Of course, Japan does try to make people do certain things or not to do certain things. But it is through the monetary temptation that Japan makes the unwilling parties willing. Japan cannot do anything through the display of powers, but it can do almost everything through financial aid and assistance. Japan more often than not follows the policy of appeasement, and everywhere it uses the logistics of chequebook diplomacy. It does not possess the politico-economic base of a successful leader but appears to have the semblance of the required superstructure.

Asian Cooperation

In the past, many attempts have been made and at present also many efforts are in the offing to have some sort of cooperative movement among the Asian countries, like the ASEAN, Asia-Pacific Cooperation, SAARC and the like. Asian nations must remember that for many obvious reasons, the USA does not want the rise of any leadership or even any successful cooperative organisation in Asia. The USA does not want anybody to dominate Asia. In fact, Japan cannot disengage itself from American influence. It is not surprising to observe that still now the US forces are not withdrawn from Japan. The forces were originally deployed in Japan to combat communism. The forces are objectively defunct now. But they are engaged till today. The huge cost is a big political and economic leverage for the United States. America wants to see and sustain actual and potential conflicting pressure points not only in Asia but also in the whole world; for otherwise, its arms and ammunitions industries will slog, and there would be a major politico-economic breakdown. Without the surplus value from its foreign sector, or more precisely, without the surplus from the internationalised exchange relations, the US economy cannot virtually survive for a long time. Asia's vast and young economies do indeed hold out constant temptations to the United States.

There is, however, no gainsaying the fact that Asia does require some kind of viable reorganisation. Cooperation in the matter of trade is not a very ideal type of cooperation for many reasons.

Such a type of cooperation is bound to be narrow, limited and partial. Trade, after all, has to reflect mutual need and comparative advantages. Asian countries today have two basic *desiderata:* economic development and peace. We strongly believe that cooperation in the areas of *economic development* and *peace* should be more meaningful and beneficial to the participating nations. Cooperation in the realm of economic development does, of course, subsume trading cooperations. Cooperations in the elimination of disequilibriating and divisive forces, and in the generation of lasting peace is the most important *desideratum* in the Asian nations today. Development and peace are not exclusive categories; but these are essentially mutually complementary and compatible.

Holy Alliance

The decisive question is: which country in Asia does have the potentiality of being the leader? The three countries which can possibly stake their claims are: Japan, China and India. We have already adumbrated the circumstantial constraints for Japan. Similarly, India has many domestic problems and pressure spots. Low growth rate, high inflation rate, downward sloping currency value, fissiparous internal forces and lack of long-term politico-economic stability stand in the way of India's external leadership. Before India hopes to do anything in the international sphere, her own house must be set in order first. The most acceptable candidate, therefore, seems to be China.

It is possible, and perhaps desirable, to have an alliance between China and Japan. Such an alliance may be a non-visible alliance. The need for a non-visible alliance arises out of Japan's two most decisive public agenda for action. First, Japan is very keen to maintain a cordial rapport with the United States. And second, Japan is also interested in improving relations with Russia. Needless to say, a clever, non-visible alliance of Japan with China may be helpful for both the parties and for Asia as a whole. While this can give China the needed political positivism, it can simultaneously reduce the US pressure on Asia. All this may not immediately bring the heaven to the Asian people, but it can probably save them from the hell of exploitation and regimentation of America's gunboat diplomacy. ■

Mainstream for Rs 5

Printer's devil last week pushed up the price of Mainstream from the existing Rs 5 to Rs 15 to the excitement of its staff, anxiety of its distributors and consternation of its readers (who either purchase it or subscribe to it every week). The Editor and the Manager of this weekly hereby apologise for any inconvenience caused by this inadvertent error and assure that Mainstream will continue to be sold at Rs 5 every week—until the Union Finance Minister chooses to break its back.

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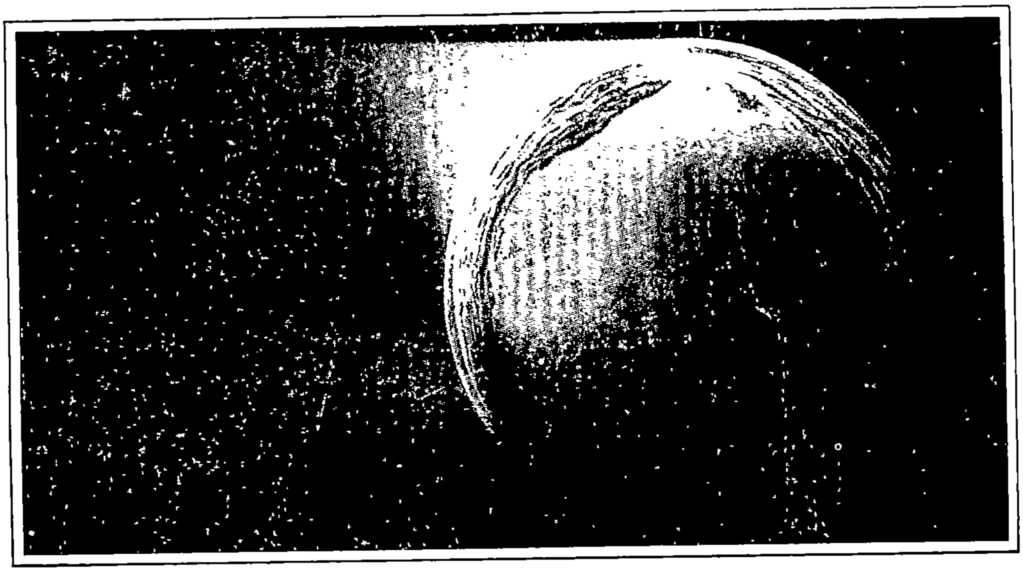

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Special Article on Sangh Parivar's Fantasies

Mainstream

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EDITORIAL

Tinkering Won't Do

For a considerable length of time now the Congress has been a victim of largescale dissidence at almost every level of functioning, this dissidence being by and large connected with the loaves and fishes that accompany power. Dissidence at the highest level has also not been uncommon although seldom does it come out in the open. Even Rajiv Gandhi's conflict with V.P. Singh would not have reached the proportions it did had the then Prime Minister given a more mature response to the actions of the then Defence Minister. In fact if Rajiv Gandhi had taken such an approach not only would he have been in a position to preserve the ruling party's unity, the Opposition too would have been deprived of exploiting the situation to its advantage in the way in which it was able to do so in the subsequent period.

The latest crisis in the Congress brings out the contrast in Narasimha Rao's style of working with that of his predecessor. The statement issued by the Minister for Human Resource Development, Arjun Singh, criticising Narasimha Rao's leadership could have evoked a sharp reaction from the Prime Minister and Congress President. But that, from all available indications, would have made matters worse. Instead Narasimha Rao not only remained silent, striking the characteristic cautious stance that has marked his Prime Ministership since mid-1991, he also spoke little at the marathon meeting of the Congress Working Committee where the reiteration of full support to Narasimha Rao's leadership by all the members present eventually compelled Arjun Singh to retract (although the official statement issued at the end of the meet and Arjun Singh's consequent clarification show that he has not fully withdrawn his statement in whose operative part the HRD Minister had categorically underscored that "any office in a democratic set-up, whether of a party or the country, cannot only be adorned"). It was more than transparent that Narasimha Rao's astute handling of the situation had compeletely isolated Arjun Singh; but the patch-work arrangement worked out did not inflict humiliation on him. Rather, the sense of moderation advocated by Sharad Pawar and N.D. Tiwari that finally prevailed is fully in conformity with the Prime Minister-cum-Congress President's temperament and psyche.

There was widespread media speculation of an impending split in the ruling party. Any drastic step of disciplinary action against Arjun Singh would have resulted in such an eventuality thereby accentuating the overall crisis; that would have definitely had an adverse effect not only on the Congress but the country's polity as such for it would have hardly strengthened the struggle to preserve our secular democracy now endangered by the mounting onslaughts of religious sectarianism. In that sense the outcome of the CWC meet is doubtless welcome.

At the same time Arjun Singh has made it clear that far from being cowed down he would continue to articulate his views and concerns. He is striving his best to project himself as a crusader against the communal menace eating into the vitals of our pluralistic democratic system. If his efforts are intended to exert pressure on the party leadership to act with vigour and resist the majoritarian offensive based on the pernicious and divisive ideology being sought to be sold as *Hindutva*, few would have any difference with him. But by his actions he has frequently betrayed his desire to engage in a fierce power struggle for which purpose he wants to emerge as a hardline champion of secularism as opposed to Narasimha Rao's soft-line strategy. This posture would not take him far in the Congress or the political arena outside the ruling party.

As for Narasimha Rao, he must necessarily address the issues raised by Arjun Singh and take decisive steps to strengthen the unity of the party ranks by unveiling an innnovative programme of action aimed at defeating the designs of religious sectarianism through a comprehensive policy of socio-economic reforms geared to amelioration of the conditions of the bulk of the populace. Reliance on the Fund-Bank sponsored new economic policies piloted by the Finance Minister cannot lead us to our desired objective.

However, the scenario being what it is, one can hardly expect the Surajkund session of the AICC to chart out a new path on those lines dictated by the demands of the present-day realities. But there is no gainsaying that such a path alone has the potentiality of galvanising the Congress party to effectively meet the formidable communal challenge in the days ahead.

March 24 *Editor*

COMMENTARY

The Russian Crisis

The economic crisis in the Russian Federation has snowballed into a full-fledged political crisis. This simple truth is being sought to be concealed in most of the analyses and commentaries relating to President's Yeltsin's call for the April 25 referendum and acquisition of special powers.

What needs to be understood in the context of the present conflict between the Russian Parliament and President is that it was the mega-Parliament of Russia—the 1033-member Congress of People's Deputies—which had granted special powers to President Yeltsin after the abortive coup of August 1991. Hence those who are shouting hoarse about the domination of Communists and hardliners in that Congress must realise that the same Congress had stood solidly behind Boris Yeltsin and his policies in 1991. Thus it is incorrect to present it as being dominated by Communists (who include, incidentally, a substantial number of Stalinists). In fact a large number of Deputies were elected by defeating the official Communist Party nominees. Despite economic hardships in the country the old-guard Communists are still thoroughly discredited and cannot win a majority in any election even in league with the nationalists.

Actually the Centrist forces represented by The Civic Union (led by the Vice-President, Alexander Rutskoi, Arkady Volsky of the Party of Entrepreneurs and Nikolai Travkin heading the Democratic Party) constitute a majority in the Congress. In the past Yeltsin had the backing of the Centrist forces. But the negative effects of the "shock therapy" of marketised reforms charted out by Yeltsin's former Prime Minister, Yegor Gaidar, with full US support led the Centrist forces to adopt a different stand. Whereas even after Gaidar's removal and replacement by a moderate, Victor Chernomyrdin, as the country's Prime Minister, Yeltsin has pledged to go ahead with his reform programme; the Centrist forces are keen to embark on "economic stabilisation" in the first place (wherein the state sector will retain a vital role) before undertaking a modified policy of reforms. This parting of ways between Yeltsin and the Centrists represented by the Civic Union has resulted in the current imbroglio with the Parliament deciding to strip Yeltsin of his special powers.

It is true as the US President, Bill Clinton, has said, the only way out of the present logjam is to seek the people's mandate. In fact the Constitutional Court has also upheld the President's right to seek a vote of confidence from the people. But the manner in which he has sought to govern by decree by assuming special powers has evoked strong criticism of the Court which has described these steps as illegal. Ruslan Khasbulatov, the Russian Parliament's Speaker, feels that this stand of the Constitutional Court has paved the way for Yeltsin's impeachment by the Congress of People's Deputies. However, whether such a move would succeed or not again depends in a large measure on the moderate Centrists who have the backing of Mikhail Gorbachev, the former Soviet President. (Gorbachev has suggested that the best means to overcome the crisis is to go for early elections to both the Parliament and the office of the President, if possible by this summer—a viewpoint echoed by Khasbulatov as well).

The Western nations have declared full-throated support to Yeltsin and his reforms in the name of democracy. They all suffer from the fallacious notion that marketisation is synonymous with democracy. Their support to Yeltsin may not be of much help to the Russian President since a large body of opinion in Russia currently feels that foreign dependence is not in the national interest of Russia a point gaining increasing currency in the country today. (Clinton meanwhile, has referred to the presence of a large band of reformers other than Yeltsin in Russia.) Actually what is necessary in the present-day conditions is to allow Russia pursue the course of economic stabilisation so as to reduce the impoverishment of the masses without curtailing democracy or individual initiative on the one hand and the effective functioning of the state sector on the other. That indeed is the best way for Russia to surmount its present travails without giving any quarter to both Stalinist totalitarianism and the tyranny of the unfettered free market.

March 24 *S.C.*

Time to Smash the Mafia

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

The BJP leader, L.K. Advani, is right in stating, as he did in Madras on March 21, that the bomb blasts in Bombay and Calcutta had nothing to do with the Ayodhya issue. At the same time it would be naive to claim that the communal upheaval that came in the wake of the Ayodhya happenings on December 6, did not provide the ideal setting for the blasts in Bombay on March 12. The general environment of violence in the country certainly got a fillip from the uninhibited demonstration of violence at Ayodhya on December 6—whose reverberations were felt in many parts of the country and abroad. As a responsible political leader, one would not expect Advani to gloss over this aspect of the present crisis.

The BJP leader has taken the line that these blasts in the two metropolitan centres of the country are the logical extension of the terrorist violence in Punjab and Kashmir, which are linked to Pakistani interference in our internal affairs: hence the demand for declaring Pakistan a terrorist state, which incidentally was raised a year ago in some of the official pronouncements as well. The "foreign hand" theory is widely held and with it is linked the likely role of the ISI. While there is nothing to refute such a possibility, what needs to be emphasised is that the channel through which this latest round of terrorist violence is being perpetrated in our country is very much indigenous and fairly unmistakable. Whether it is the Memon brothers in Bombay or the Rashid-Omar gangs in Calcutta, these have become familiar figures in Indian politics particularly in the last two decades.

In the early seventies Haji Mastan and his fellow-*mastans* came into limelight as patrons of well-known political figures. Not only were they not punished for openly engaging in magnum-size smuggling as their regular profession, but their political patrons provided them with safety and freedom since they brought abundance of funds with which the politician could pollute politics. The emergence of the mastan as a factor in Indian politics can no longer be denied or overlooked, and practically all major political parties have their involvement with the mastan fraternity.

The mounting violence during election season has to a large measure been due to the readiness of political parties to use such gangs for the election warfare. In the rural area, the powerful among the landed gentry keep their private army which the police dare not touch for fear of annoying the political bosses. It is the private army that is used to terrorise the deprived sections raising demands for their legitimate dues or resenting ghastly social inequities. The politician linked to the landed gentry would not touch such private army: rather they make use of them.

In the urban centres, the *mastan* flourishes. In fact, our mastans have reached the global standards of mafia dons, complete with their godfathers. It is no secret that some of the party bosses and Ministers, including some of the Chief Ministers, quite blatantly extend their patronage to such characters from the underworld. This is a feature which is not confined to the Congress though the involvement of the Congress leaders with *mastans* at the local and the pradesh levels and even at the national level in some cases, is fairly well known.

◆

THE Calcutta dislcosures have brought out that the virus has spread to other parties as well. The *satta* don whose store of explosives blew up, is widely publicised as a close friend of some of the CPI-M leaders of the city, and there has been no convincing refutation of the charge from the Left party leaders. The only thing which has come out is the counter-charge that the local Congress also had another *mastan* in the area by the name of Omar. What is disturbing is that a party known for its well-knit discipline is not immune from this vicious infection from the underworld.

As for other parties, there are numerous instances of hobnobbing with such anti-social characters. Haji Mastan's solicitude for a top Janata Dal leader once hit the headlines and has never been rebutted. The muscle-men of the Dhanbad coalfields have throughout enjoyed the

(Continued on page 33)

Bhagat Singh for Today

NAZIRUL HASAN ANSARI

Remembering Bhagat Singh on the sixtysecond anniversary of his glorious and heroic martyrdom (March 23) cannot be a ceremonial or routine affair today. When the entire country, plagued as it is with the *Hindutva* brand of communalism in its worst-ever ferocity and perfidy, is yet to overcome the trauma of the Ayodhya tragedy and the horrendous communal carnage that rocked large parts of this sub-continent thereafter, Bhagat Singh's words are of particular relevance for our nation and polity.

In the backdrop of the environment obtaining in India today, it would be most appropriate to study some of the passages of his *Sampradayik Dange aur Unka Elaj* (Communal Riots and the Remedy) that came out in print in the journal *Kirti* in 1927. It is no essay in academic flair, but it exudes Bhagat Singh's deepest human concern for the Indian people who were then, as now, suffering due to senseless human killings in the name of religion. Here are a few excerpts from the article:

> .... The condition of India has now become extremely grave. The followers of one religion have become suddenly sworn enemies of the followers of the other religion. So much so, that to belong to one particular religion is reason enough for becoming enemy of the other religion. Such a feeling has gained currency.
>
> .... If still someone harbours any doubts about the gravity of the situation, one should look at the recent riots of Lahore to gauge and determine the savagery and ferocity of the killings. ... How Muslims have killed innocent Hindus and Sikhs and how Sikhs have been unsparing in their killings, deploying their best capabilities. Such brutal mutual killings have not been resorted to by the killers to award punishment to someone found guilty of some crime, but for the simple reason and for the fact that someone was either Hindu, Sikh or Muslim. For Muslims, it has been enough to kill if someone was either Hindu or Sikh and likewise to be a Muslim was sufficient reason for his being killed.

His deep anguish can be seen in the lines below:

> .... When the situation has reached this aggravated stage, then God alone knows what will happen to India. In view of the obtaining situation, India's future appears extremely bleak. These religions have wrought havoc to India and one does not know when the scourge of such horrendous communal riots will come to an end and India will be freed from them—from such religious riots.
>
> .... At the moment political leaders of India are conducting themselves so shamelessly. Those very leaders, who had sweared and vowed to liberate the country and had proclaimed of shouldering the great responsibility for that purpose, never tiring of talking about 'common nationality' and who had been vociferous in declaring their faith in the attainment of *"Swaraj"*, so unflinchingly and devotedly in the past, these very same leaders are now either keeping mum with their heads bowed in shame or are swaying along with the raging wind of blind religious bigotry.

Besides the demagoguery and 'double-speak' of these 'lost leaders', Bhagat Singh underlined the supine subterfuges of the leadership in face of horrendous communal criminality:

> .... Those amongst them, sitting on the fence silent in remorse and shame, concealing their faces are not insignificant in numbers. .... But regarding those political leaders who have since joined and have already found full convergence with the current of communal movement, they are to be found in hundreds, if only one unravels the phenomenon and digs a bit beneath the earth's surface. Leaders (with a conscience) who seek well-being, happiness and prosperity of all people from their very heart are few and the tornado of communalism is so wild and fierce that these few, well-meaning and good-intentioned leaders are incapable of halting the process.

Expressing his concern he added:

> ... It appears as if the Indian political leadership has gone completely bankrupt.

Bhagat Singh's worst fears have now come true, and the future of India appears as bleak at the hands of its 'bankrupt' political leadership.

◆

ABOUT the role of newspapers Bhagat Singh had opined:

> .... Those others, instrumental in fomenting communal riots, and playing the key-role in it, are newspapermen. The profession of journalism, considered to be esteemed once upon a time, has now been reduced to rubbish. They are blaring out against each other in screaming headlines, besides inciting people's savage bigoted passions for unleashing the orgy of mutual killings.

Elaborating upon his scathing criticism of newspapers he added:

> .... Not confined to one or two places, but in a number of places communal conflagration broke out, simply because newspapers penned down explosive and highly provocative articles, while such writers who were able to keep their hearts and minds clean and were able to maintain a balanced poise in those turbulent times were barely few.

Nothing appears to have changed since then vis-a-vis the morality and integrity of newspapers. Bhagat Singh himself weilded a powerful pen, he was a prolific writer and journalist within his own rights, having his stint in several papers from *Kirti* to Ganesh Shankar Vidyarathi's *Pratap*. He had this to say about the duty and

(Continued on page 34)

SPECIAL ARTICLE

Primer on Parivar Fantasies

B.G. VERGHESE

The BJP-VHP-RSS-Shiv Sena litany about pseudo-secularism, minorityism, Muslim appeasement and the rest is by now well known through constant iteration. It has been repeated so loud and long that many, even outside the *Parivar* fold, may have come to believe in some of these fantasies. A simple primer on the facts might, therefore, be useful.

1. **Statement:** *All Indians are Hindus which is a cultural expression embracing all those who live in India.*

Response: This is unexceptionable but purely semantic. However, "Hindu" is also defined by the *Parivar* as a religious as much as an original or indigenous national category, so-called late-comers like Christians and Muslims being "foreigners". This is confusing. Until the *Parivar* stops speaking in many voices, as it is prone to do, such ambiguity will be suspect.

Some ideologues of the RSS-BJP-VHP have sought to project the theory that while every society is rooted in a dominant civilisation, the logical and legitimate driving force of Hindu civilisation in India was challenged by Islam and thereafter by the British-Nehruvian-Marxian secular, modernist model. The current social revolution represents the climax of an epic civilisational battle before the ultimate triumph of Hindu civilisation with the establishment of *Hindu Rashtra.*

2. **Statement:** *The culture of India is Hindu.*

Response: Surely, yes. But while being the dominant stream, with many variations within itself, Indian culture cannot exclude the Islamic, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, Christian, Parsee, Jewish and numerous tribal and other streams. All these have constantly interacted at many levels. So much in language, dress, art, architecture, music, dance, cusine and otherwise represents a synthesis that has enlarged and enriched Indian culture.

3. **Statement:** *The Aryans were original inhabitants of India. They founded the Harappan civilisation.*

Response: This is unhistorical. Aryan essentially represents a language rather than a racial group. Aryan influence was not so much an invasion from the north-west as a linguistic migration. The Harappan culture was limited to north-western India.

Having declared others "foreigners", *Parivar* historians are out to establish the myth of the primordial "Hindu" as the pure people. Hence, efforts by certain princes to stop the march of Alexander are sought to be described as India's "first war of independence". Likewise, the Mauryas, under Chanakya's direction, are mistakenly being portrayed as the fountainhead of "Hindu nationalism".

The *Parivar* has endeavoured to rewrite history textbooks, some of which were introduced into the school system in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh by the Kalyan Singh and Patwa Governments in 1992. This represents a systematic effort to appropriate all history, remove any seeming warts, and glorify the rest. Dynastic history is projected and heroes and villains selectively promoted, while popular history is ignored.

The entire *"Babar ke aulad"* theory is erroneous. Babar did not replace a Hindu kingdom in Delhi. The Mughals displaced the Lodhis who overran the Sayyaids who had overcome the Tughlaks who ousted the Khiljis, who in turn ended the so-called Delhi Sultanate which followed Mohammad Ghori's conquest, all of this several hundred years before Babar. Many provincial dynasties remained untouched by the rise and fall of Delhi kingdoms over considerable periods. Delhi history does not exhaust Indian history.

Only a small number of Muslim Indians are discendants of Afghans, Turks, Arabs or others. The vast majority are Indian converts.

◆

4. **Statement:** *Babar (or his general, Mir Baqi) destroyed the Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir in Ayodhya in 1528. This is typical of the destruction and conversion of Hindu shrines earlier and since, the latest examples being the systematic vandalising of temples in Kashmir.*

Response: The alleged destruction of an extant Ram Mandir at the Babri Masjid site is unsubstantiated. The last "diggings" by VHP-led squads through 1990 and 1991 were done by its ideologues without the permission or the presence of anyone from the Archaeological Survey of India or independent experts. Nor were any *in situ* photographs taken of all that has been claimed to have been discovered. The entire site has now been rendered archaeologically sterile. This was an act of self-serving vandalism.

It is true that conquerors at various earlier times have destroyed places of worship and other buildings that symbolised preceding political and social regimes. This kind of medieval barbarity has been witnessed around the world and not only in India. Hindu political revival during the sixth-ninth centuries resulted in the destruction or conversion of numerous Buddhist and Jain sites. The Maha Bodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya is a prime example. The Jain cave temples in Udaygiri, Orissa, are another. Both are currently in dispute.

Every history has a pre-history. Any effort to undo the wrongs of history forcibly can only result in the destructive unravelling of nationhood through fratricidal vendetta.

No place of worship of whatever description should be vandalised. Unfortunately riotous mobs have indulged in such sacrilege at various times and places in post-independence India. No section of society is blameless. But assiduously propagated reports by *Parivar* spokesman of systematic destruction of Hindu shrines by Muslims in Kashmir during the period between 1989 and December 6, 1992 have been shown to be unfounded. It is, however, a fact that at Ayodhya itself *Parivar* storm-troopers destroyed the Ram Chabootra and Sita-ki-Rasoi adjacent to the Babri-Ramjanmastan site and burnt or damaged several mosques and idgahs in the town. They are also alleged to have switched or removed some of the idols at these places on December 6, 1992. Were these acts of piety?

5. **Statement:** *Why should Muslims be regionally separate as in Jammu and Kashmir and not be "fully integrated" with India? Article 370 breeds separatism. Illustratively, other Indians are precluded from purchasing property in J&K.*

Response: Jammu and Kashmir is fully integrated with India. Integration is not covered by Article 370 but by Article 1 of the Constitution which defines the territorial extent of the Union as listed in Schedule 1. Article 370 defines Centre-State relations. Any special dispensation provided therein merely represents an agreed constitutional procedure which was embodied in the Instrument of Accession signed by the rulers of all the erstwhile 600 princely states, Jaipur, Mysore and Indore *et al.* as much as J&K. This is the outcome of a solemn contract or treaty. It is another matter that all other States voluntarily decided to adopt the Indian Constitution. This could not happen in J&K partly on account of the ongoing war with Pakistan and the internationalisation of the Kashmir dispute.

There are special provisions pertaining to several other States in Articles 371 A to H of the Constitution as well as in the Fifth and Sixth Schedules pertaining to tribal areas and the North-East tribal States. There is an Inner Line Regulation governing travel by Indians to many northern frontier areas outside J&K. There used to be Part A, B, C and D States at one time. Now there remain only States and Union Territories. Lepchas and Bhotias enjoy weighted representation in the Sikkim legislature. No income tax is levied from Scheduled Tribes in any of the North-Eastern States. Each of these provisions has evolved out of special circumstances.

The notion that Article 370 has encouraged separatism is fanciful. Though no equivalent Article applies to Punjab. Assam, Tamil Nadu, Nagaland, Mizoram, or Tripura, there have been separatist movements in these States at various times.

It is true that none other than J&K subjects can purchase property in that State. But this has nothing to do with Article 370 and is a product of an administrative fiat promulgated long years ago by the Maharaja. The same restriction applies to outsiders purchasing property in Himachal Pradesh which was until recently under BJP rule. Many laws preclude alienation of tribal lands.

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6. **Statement:** *The carving out of Mallapuram as a Muslim-majority district in Kerala some years ago has created a mini-Pakistan.*

Response: A number of new districts have been made since independence and continue to be created, sometimes for the better adminstration of backward areas. Mallapuram is one such district. It does have a Muslim majority perhaps, but this is no different from the gerrymandering of district boundaries through the establishment of new units to satisfy various caste or tribal or other special interest groups. Some of this regrettably happens to pander to vote-banks. But why single out Mallapuram when similar examples can be cited. What is sought to be proved?

7. **Statement:** *Muslims engender separateness by clinging to their own personal law. They are unwilling to accept a uniform civil code as enjoined in Article 44, a Directive Principle.*

Response: The fact is that all communities follow their own personal laws within the framework of the Constitution. A uniform civil code is an ideal towards which the country must indeed work. But there is nothing to suggest that "uniform" in this context necessarily means "common" in terms of being a single, unvarying statute as opposed to uniformity in the matter of principles. Article 13 in fact defines "law" as including, among other things, "custom or usage" having the force of law within Indian territory. This could well apply to personal laws, though such an intrepretation has yet to be definitively tested. In any event, an optional uniform civil code would be appropriate. There are vital gaps in several personal laws. Reform must move in the direction of securing gender equity. No community other than the Hindus, for example, have an adoption law in India. This is manifestly absurd. Such gap-filling apart, a civil code is also necessary to meet the requirements of inter-community marriages.

Interestingly, Goa has a uniform civil code, a legacy of Protuguese rule.

The *Sangh Parivar* makes much of Muslim reluctance to accept a uniform civil code. The Shah Bano case is cited. Here Muslim insistence on resiling from an already established uniform criminal code is said to have led the government to legislate the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act.

This was indeed a most controversial decision, but no different in principle from what happened in 1976 when the government again breached established uniformity, this time on the civil code. This it did by amending the Special Marriage Act to provide that Hindu couples marrying under that dispensation would be entitled to be governed for purposes of inheritance by the Hindu Succession Act or their personal law rather than by the Indian Succession Act. In both cases, uniformity was sacrificed.

Again, although the so-called Sharda Act prescribes the age of marriage for women as 18, the law recognises marriages below this age as the Act does not invalidate the marriage but only penalises the parents. Despite this, Hindu child betrothals are common and are annually celebrated with great festivity in Rajasthan.

Practices such as *sati*, bride burnings associated with dowry, female foeticide and dedication of girls as *devadasis* continue to prevail in certain parts of the country and are even defended as traditional customs. There are, of course, strong movements against them and it would be totally wrong to make their scattered and diminishing observance reason to denigrate Hindu society.

The central and most compelling principle favouring a uniform civil code is gender justice. In the Hindu Guardianship Act, for example, it is the father who is designated the natural guardian. There is a male bias in most personal laws.

A particular dispensation enjoyed only by HIndus, and which entails a measure of pecuniary benefit at that, is the assessment of certain categories of Hindus as members of Hindu Undivided Families. The country's tax laws recognise three categories of assessees: individuals, corporate bodies and HUFs. There were about 200,000 HUF assessees in 1989-90 who collectively paid a tax of around Rs 255 crores. Since an individual is entitled to split his income and show part of it as belonging to a HUF, this reduces the element of progression in the tax rate thus providing the beneficiary a tax shelter.

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8. **Statement:** *The "pseudo-secularists" are guilty of "minorityism". Look at the Shah Bano case.*

Responnse: The Shah Bano case is repeatedly mentioned as a crass example of pandering to the Muslim vote-bank. The mirror image case of the Special Marriage Act amendment favouring Hindu couples has already been cited. This apart, Article 290A of the Constitution uniquely provides that payment to certain *Devaswom* funds shall be charged to the consolidated fund of the States of Kerala and Tamil Nadu for the maintenance of Hindu temples and shrines. No one has ever grudged these provisions as they form part of the settlements arrived at the time of the integration of the former princely states.

Again, in law, Hindu dieties are held to be juristic personalities who may own property under land reform laws. Many temples thereby own considerable estates.

In many parts of the country the Vishwakarma festival is celebrated annually when artisans and workmen decorate and worship their tools and machines even in public sector factories. It would be churlish for anybody to cavil at this charming custom.

9. **Statement:** *Minorityism confers an exclusive benefit on all others at the cost of the Hindus.*

Response: This is untenable. The compass of the term "minority" is not properly understood. It is noteworthy that in the Constituent Assembly, Muslim and Christian spokesmen voluntarily gave up the right to political reservations which they had hitherto enjoyed and which the majority community was willing to accord them in the future. What survived, therefore, was only protection for religious and linguisitic minorities for educational and cultural purposes at both national and State levels. Thereby, whereas Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Parsees are national minorities, Hindus are entitled to recognition as a minority in, say, Punjab. Indeed, by judgements of the Courts, Arya Samajists are recognised as a linguistic minority in Punjab even within the Hindu fold. They run DAV schools in many parts of the country. Likewise, the Supreme Court has ruled the Brahmo Samaj to be a minority based on religion in Bihar (Dipender Nath vs Bihar); the Calcutta High Court has decreed Jains to be a minority in West Bengal and as such entitled to the benefits conferred by Articles 29 and 30 (Sree Jain Swetamber Terapanthi Vidyalaya vs State). The Supreme Court has in fact ruled that a minority may be determined by reference to the entire population of a State (Kerala Education Bill, 1957). Hindus too, therefore, may enjoy minority status in certain cirumstances.

10. **Statement:** *Why should minorities alone be permitted to run educational institutions of their choice?*

Response: Article 29 says that "any section of citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same". Article 30 in turn provides that "all minorities, whether based on religion or language shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice". But the Supreme Court has laid down that enrolment of minority children must not exceed 50 per cent of the total.

Minorities have a right to administer their own institutions, but this precludes maladministration or dilution of standards which are set by secular authorities. Likewise, all linguistic minorities are entitled to be taught their mother tongue if there are 40 or so children in a school speaking that language. They must be taught in the medium of their mother tongue if the concentration of that linguistic minority exceeds a certain proportion in the district/city. Thus, there is no special concession in this regard for Urdu schools; and Urdu is not a "Muslim language" as some members of the *Parivar* seem to believe.

◆

11. **Statement:** *The BJP demands that the Minorities Commission be scrapped and replaced by a Human Rights Commission.*

Response: This demand is diluted by the universality of the term "minority". However, it is another matter whether having a Human Rights Commission which also safeguards minority rights would not be desirable and convenient since minority rights are human rights under international law. One reason for separate institutions could be that a single body might be too unwieldly. Human rights cover the rights of women and Scheduled Castes and Tribes who are given special recognition under the Constitution. The country already has separate Commissions for Scheduled Castes and Tribes, Women and Lingustic Minorities in addition to a Minorities Commission.

12. **Statement:** *But should Salman Rushdie's* "Satanic Verses" *have been banned?*

Response: The book was in fact not allowed to be imported under the Sea Customs Act. Many will concede that banning books is not at all desirable as this smacks of censorship and curtails freedom of thought. All fundamental rights are, however, subject to health, morality and the maintenance of public order. Moreover, this is not the first book (or film) to have been banned. There are other cases in India where bans have been imposed in order to protect the sensibilities of other communities, including Hindus. However, the subsequent fall-out of the Rushdie affair in Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi, following an innocuous statement by the pro-Vice Chancellor, Prof Mushirul Hasan, like the agitation over the Shah Bano case, does provide grist to critics of Muslim Indians.

13. **Statement:** *The Muslims do not practice family planning and are polygamous. On account of their higher birth rate they will soon change the demographic composition of the country.*

Response : This is quite untrue. Muslims do practice family planning and there is no scriptural injunction against it in Islam. Certainly within India, there is proven evidence of increasing resort to family planning by Muslims as much as by other communities.

It would be best to let the figures speak for themselves. Hindus constitutee 82.35 per cent of the population and Muslims 11.73 per cent. The mean age of marriage of both communities is almost the same, whether in urban or rural areas. The general marital fertility rate of Muslims is higher than that of Hindus, but there has been a generally declining trend in both rural and urban Muslim fertility. At 1981 growth rates it would take Muslims 316 years or more to outstrip Hindus in number. But with population stabilising in another few decades, such a prospect is totally out of the question and Hindus are unlikely ever to constitute less than around 80 per cent of India's population.

The impression about polygamous marriages is quite baseless. On the contrary, a sample survey undertaken by the Registrar-General in 1961 showed that Hindus were more polygamous (5.80 per cent) than Muslims (5.73 per cent). That apart, with a sex ratio adverse to women, large scale polygamy is not possible and would, if at all, result in a decline in Muslim fertility rates.

More striking evidence of the falsity of the *Parivar's* population thesis is available in the fact that J&K, a Muslim majority State, had in 1989-90 a lower birth rate (31.4 per 1000) than UP (36.5), Madhya Pradesh (36.4), Bihar (34.8), and Rajasthan (33.4) all of which constitute the BJP heartland.

The real reason for high fertility rates are low socio-economic achievements in terms of education and literacy, health, nutrition, and the status of women. These are the problems to attack. And they are universal problems and not sectarian concerns.

◆

14. **Statement:** *But what about Muslim in-migration from Bangladesh which is altering the demographic balance in many parts of India?*

Response: Bangladesh migration into India is an old phenomenon pre-dating partition, though the numbers of such migrants cited by the BJP (going up to 15 million) are exaggerated. This is distress (and not communal) migration of a kind witnessed within India itself and to Lanka in the 1950s from the drought prone districts of southern Tamil Nadu. Such illicit immigration is also to be seen in movements of Hispanics from Mexico to the United States. It is wrong to look on Bangladesh Muslims as "infiltrators" and Hindu migrants as "refugees".

Such in-migration for whatever reason does impose a burden and constitutes a problem for India. The answer lies in policing the border more closely and detecting and repatriating illicit immigrants through due process of law. To use the incidence of Bangladeshi infiltration to hound genuine Indian Bengali Muslims would be outrageous.

The truth is that illicit immigration takes place with the encouragement and support of officials, political parties and vested interests who use these migrants as sweated labour and enroll them as voters at election time to create vote-banks.

15. **Statement:** *The Muslim population is also increasing as a result of conversions, aided by West Asian money. Witness Meenakshipuram in Tamil Nadu in 1981. And was not the right to propagation of religion included in the Constitution at the insistence of Christians and Muslims.*

Response: Article 25 does indeed permit "freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion". The "propagation" aspect was debated in the Constituent Assembly. But it was pointed out that propagation was in any case inherent in the fundamental right to "freedom of speech and expression" [Article 19(1)a] and that including the word "propagation" in Article 25 conferred no additional right.

In any case, the right to propagation is universal and available to Hindus as much as to any other community or denomination. And that right has reportedly been exercised by Hindu bodies as well to convert or reconvert tribals, Muslims and Christians in different parts of the country, including Meenakshipuram. *The Statesman* (April 10, 1992) documented one such case in a cluster of Muslim villages in Hathras district, UP. The reporter, Vidya Subramaniam, found BJP and RSS involvement.

Conversion by force, fraud or inducement is barred and the rights conferred by Article 25 are specifically made subject to "public order, morality and health" and to all other fundamental rights.

The age of mass conversions is over, especially in a plural, multi-denominational society. Such events may yet take place, but they will obviously be subject to the most searching scrutiny.

16. **Statement:** *The Parivar decries "appeasement" of the Muslims.*

Response: Appeasement must mean either political or economic pampering. What are the facts?

The Muslims renounced political reservation in 1949. Their representation in the legislatures, administrative and other services and the armed forces is well below their population ratio. True, distinguished Muslims have risen to the highest positions in the land in every field. While this is important symbolically, it cannot compensate for the general level of under-representation.

The argument that Muslims are a vote-bank and vote as a group is by no means proven or no more true than such an assertion in relation to any other group, caste or community.

As far as socio-economic indices are concerned, Muslims clearly emerge as a grossly underprivileged community in terms of literacy, higher education, employment or economic achievement. The community may itself be partly responsible for its educational backwardness; but the state and society have also a responsibility to discharge. There is no question whatsoever of "appeasement". The position with regard to housing, special upliftment or area programmes, etc. also shows no conscious effort to benefit Muslims as such, let alone appease them. The charge is frivolous.

17. **Statement**: *Muslims must join the mainstream which, in this case, must mean obliterating their identity and culture.*

Response: "Mainstream" can be a dangerous word and often betrays the arrogance of the centre towards the periphery, whether territorially or culturally (as measured by numbers). We are all part of the mainstream and there is no reason for anyone to invite or command anyone else to join it. Eliminate the perpheries and the mainstream shrinks.

Conclusion: The responses made above are not intended to denigrate or criticise the majority community but to place the *Parivar's* lop-sided logic in perspective and to expose its hollow, sectarian hate campaign. Its sermons are testimony to dangerously divisive and perverse attitudes. It is the *Parivar* that needs to be told: "Think Indian. Be Indian." ■

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With All Malice Towards Planning

Development Planning and Management in the Changing Perspective

KALYAN RAIPURIA

Economic change is a *sine qua non* for a developing economy and its efficient management is critical to the pace of growth. While this is widely recognised, there is no complete agreement on the role of planning in efficient management of change. Many a times the case is made that planned management results in unnecessary interference in economic activities jeopardising the pace of growth, often with malice.

Essential Role of Planning

But, as long as planning is adaptable to necessary economic change in short-, medium-, as well as long-term, this system not only promotes but in fact is essential for faster growth on a sustainable basis and for wider distribution of benefits. For this, planning has to be democratic and reasonably well orchestrated. Basic tenets of planning once consented in an appropriate forum need to be adhered to by all concerned.

Such a view has existed for quite some time and is still firmly held not only by many development economists, but also by outstanding public men. Our former President said in his farewell address to the Members of Parliament that emphasis on service to the weaker and the vulnerable sections of society is possible only under planning.[1] Indeed, planning is a means to stylise the integrated solution to diverse problems. This is no *hosannah* to the planners.

The malice towards planning is not widely shared by public men, entrepreneurs, professionals or common men and is indeed without deep understanding of the planning process. Indeed, over-planning, reflected in wide ranging controls and administered prices/levies, all so dear to civil servants, is to be avoided and replaced by indicative planning endowed with expertise. Development management is not like management during war with given conditions requiring controls of all sorts.

The author is an Adviser (Financial Resources), Planning Commission. This article is based on the Prof. D.T. Lakdawala Memorial Lecture by the Institute for International Development Studies that he delivered at a seminar organised at Calcutta (14 January, 1993).

Adaptation in Planning

Over the period, planning practices have adapted themselves to the latest needs of economic change reflected presently in the emphasis in the global context of relative roles of the private and public sectors; importance of infrastructure and external sector in resource allocation and policy formulation; shift from direct controls (or QRS) to indirect measures; and replacement of bureaucratic decision-making by public participation in certain areas.

The quality of governance itself is being questioned within and outside the government and hence a clear shift to indicative planning.

It is recognised in many quarters that most of the policy initiatives can be associated with the published/unpublished Studies/Reports of the Advisory Panels set up and research projects commissioned within the planning system, a number of field-level programme evaluation reports notwithstanding. The lag in carrying out them needs to be overcome. Evidence is galore that if planning was respected, the reform process could have started at least a decade ago and in its comprehensive sense.

The areas of initiatives included industrial licencing and planning, net foreign exchange maximisation, foreign exchange potential of the NRIS, long-term export promotion strategy improvement, in distribution of essential commodities, energy policy, perspective planning for transport development, wage policy, land reforms, multi-level planning, increased employment generation, gold policy, capital market reform, control of inflation, direct and indirect subsidies, pricing of irrigation water, performance of the SEBs, RTCs and other state-level enterprises, economy in government expenditure, framework for distribution of the Central budgetary support and borrowings, restructuring of industry, financing of private corporate sector, and new approach to Plan financing; the fundamental concerns of planning for alleviation of poverty, environmental protection, health, literacy and population planning and control and the like, and development strategies formulated by a large number of sectoral steering groups/working groups[2] for each of the five year Plans notwithstanding. The list is apparently not exhaustive. That the participation of professionals, administrators and public men is quite large is clear from the persons associated/chairing them. Hardly any aspect of the country's development has been left out of such initiatives.

Change in Focus

The key objectives of the development planning process remain higher growth, overall food self-sufficiency, containment of growth in population, employment generation, provision of basic needs for all towards human development, and expansion and strengthening of infrastructure, with continued reliance on domestic financial resources. But the focus has to be changed to quality in addition to quantitative expansion, efficiency and productivity and optimisation aside from financial and material (demand-supply) balances, reforms in pricing towards the objective of market clearing, and a widely shared information base, rather than decisions through bureaucratic commitology and confidiality, shift from dependence on the state to people's participation and private initiatives, genuine food and social security, and a coordinated and efficient service delivery system which is economically and financially sustainable.

Changed Context and Perspective

The change in the context and the perspective which require more sophisticated planning need to be widely understood. The observed malice towards planning may be the result of inadequate information and communication in their regard. The changed context is indicated by the domestic as well as global spheres, necessitating 'openness'[3] and thus increased trade orientation of the GDP.[4]

The changed perspective is indicated in the increased consumption reqirements associated with the estimated moderate, in-sight, rate of growth in income (5.5 to six per cent) and the population around 1.1 billion by 2007, with implications for expansion in food production at 288 million tonnes and corresponding levels of required inputs. There is an increasing natural resource constraint, especially of land and oil. We have a challenging energy demand and supply position. We would need a well-integrated multi-modal transport system, as also an extension of communication and information services in rural areas.

The demographic perspective is that of higher proportion of people in the 15-plus group and thus requiring jobs. The proportion of the aged (above 60 years) will be growing requiring an age-care system. The proportion of urban population will be increasing and the number of cities with a population of more than one million will grow from 12 in 1981, and in 1991 to around 40 in 2001, having implications for planning and management of infrastructure requirments and resources on the one hand, and environmental protection on the other.

Challenging Perspective

The challenging perspective of planning is indicated from the much needed improvement in the quality of life and reduction in disparities. More than half of the districts of the country have a literacy rate below the average and about half of them have female literacy rate below 20 per cent, thus keeping a large population in the dark. The targets of infant mortality rate (IMR) of 60 per cent and 100 per cent immunisation of pregnant mothers and school children by 2000 pose a planning and management challenge of the necessary medical and public health facilities, particularly in the rural areas.

Thus, the perspective is of greater and greater demand. Given the limited possibilities of raising domestic and foreign savings together beyond 25 per cent, and an increment capital-output ratio (ICOR) of around four, the overall growth rate may be only six to 6.5 per cent[5] even in the long run. Of course, the ideal would be the eight to 10 per cent achieved by China and South Korea recently and Japan earlier. Given the strength of a large-scale skilled manpower and of diversified modern infrastructure, the challenge of planning and management—in the public as well as the private sectors—is to raise the growth rate by way of efficient allocation and utilisation of resources, rather than mostly talking of outlays, grants and concessions. The state is not a *Kamadhenu*.

The role of planning, for the public as well as for the private sector, stems precisely from the challenging perspective brought out above.

Two Major Shortcomings

The two major shortcomings of planning and management, so far widely observed, have been a poorer-than-expected implementation in the public sector and the absence of macro-level planning[6] for the private sector *albeit* a broad saving-investment projection, a plethora of hindering licence and controls at micro-level.

The former brought malice to the planning system as such but stems primarily from inadequate decentralisation and thus a lack of public participation, the absence of political and bureaucratic will power for change, and a lack of political will for efficiency, while the latter was due to a limited perception of promoting private sector participation which could be observed in Japan orchestrated by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), based on mutual trust, suasion and sustained working ties. Indeed, planning has been let down but plan we must.

The present planning approach reflected in the Eighth Plan tries to overcome the above two shortcomings, with increasing emphasis on efficiency and productivity.

The need for efficient planning and management and a desirable distribution of resources and higher growth go together leading to a virtuous circle.

A re-orientation of bureaucracy is the foremost need, but signals for the mobilisation of resources and a tough revenue regime alongwith any new development programme/scheme/project *as also* for zero-based[7] Plan and non-Plan revenue expenditure (NPRE) must go at all levels of the public sector.[8] Such signals are also required in the private sector given its publicness[9] the sickness, the banks' large outstanding loans and the greater role in aggregate savings and investment assigned to it in the Eighth Plan (54.8 per cent of the total investment).

Indicative Planning

Indicative planning means, given the new context and challenging perspective, not only careful planning, strategic thinking and greater professional management, but also greater collaboration between the public and the private sectors and, above all, a sound evaluation system.

The long experience of planning in France throws light on the overall approach to a planning system compatible with a market economy, the process of consultation and dialogue among the entities, and economic forecasting system, and implementation instruments which are different from a centralised planning system.

Planning in France—called *"Le Grande Affaire de la France"* by de Gaulle beginning in January 1946, with the creation of a General Planning Office (GOP), presently going through the Tenth Plan (1989-92), and a reveiw[10] of the exercise—so clearly points to the importance of "shedding a light on the future", and strategic planning in which following the strategic line of the country, the leading functions are identified and orientations are initiated.

Strategic planning[11] is used widely by large companies which on the basis of future-oriented studies of their markets, and their strength and weaknesses set out long-term objectives and the measures to be taken for realising them.

In such a system of planning, implementation is closely followed, the instruments being consultation and dialogue, forceasting, budgetary programming, and their several sub-actions.

Given the mixed nature of our economy, the Plan does not impose obligations on the private sector. But through a sectoral approach and sectoral inververntions by so-called "horizontal policy" efforts are made to create a stable economic environment applying general conditions to companies which compare favourably with those in the trading partner countries.

A system of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) already exists between the government and public sector enterprises. Following the delicensing and deregulation of the industrial sector, a system of *Industrial Entrpreneurs Memorandum* (IEM) has been under progress[12] recently. Similar contracts, informally, are in practice between the Central and the State planners which can be finalised for improved development planning.

By way of a system of 'Plan contracts' in the French system, a private sector company is linked to the state covering a period of three to five years, touching upon productivity and quality objective, investment programming and government commitments on tariffs. These are signed by the Company and the Ministry concerned. The contracts contain safeguard clauses in case the evaluation of the economic environment prevents the conditions from being fulfilled.

Eighth Plan

The Eighth Plan (1992-97) is *indicative* in nature in the sense that a strategic view of the country's future and basic priorities are set out. As for the public sector, the Plan provides the magnitudes in some details, identifies important programmes and projects in various sectors, and outlines financing. The allocations for sectroral outlays and financing to be covered would amount to 12.6 per cent of the projected GDP, as (average basis) during the Sixth and Seventh Plans, compared to about four per cent during the First Plan, seven to eight during the Second, the Third and the Fourth Plans, and nine to ten during the Fifth and the Sixth Plans. The Eighth Plan also provides for the rest of the economy, that is, the private sector, expected to account for 12.7 per cent of sectoral targets, and brings out in focus the promotional structure needed to grow in the desired direction. The broad dimensions of sectoral growth and investment magnitudes are shown in the table (p. 15).

The Plan represents a necessary integrative system. Otherwise we shall be stuck with a fragmented approach to growth and development. It indicates the need for mid-course review and is subject to change, innovation and adjustment. As in recent Plans, the Eighth Plan points to the much needed monitoring system to give timely signals of the performance, and certain measures to involve professionals and people at large. The *sine qua non* of planning, as it emerges from the Plan document, is that it is a "shared commitment to the achievement of national priorities",[13] where malice has hardly any place.

The Eighth Five Year Plan has formal approval of the National Development Council (NDC), and thus the broad indicative magnitudes and direction of development have a general consensus. But operationally Annual Plans for five years would provide opportunity for necessary changes, innovations and reappraisals and re-planning.[14] In the changing context of planning, such appraisal may also cover the *economic conditions* which determine the economic activities, particularly investment by the private sector, that is, the household as well as the private corporate sector, focussing on agriculture, manufacturing, and different tertiary activities wherein the public sector is expected to play a reduced role compared to the previous Plans. Such appraisal would be an imperative if the Eighth Plan projections of allocations and financing, in the face of resource constraint of the government, are to be realised.

Moot Point

The moot point which can be raised is regarding the potential of and the expectations from the private sector. It can be argued that with the expected greater role of the private sector, the task of Plan implementation and evaluation[15] will remain less than half completed if innovative mechanism and policies are not there to make its role feasible. While the complimentary role of both the sectors[16] has always been realised and would remain so in the coming days the stakes are now higher. In fact certain policy measures have already been initiated towards the greater role of the private sector in infrastructure. The capital market has given favourable indications for the resource mobilisation and management potential appears to have developed. Mechanism for monitoring needs to be evolved in which the private sector, concerned Central departments and the States are all constructive partners, joined by an enormous number of private

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suppliers, contractors, vendors, consultants, and other service performers. The past performance (see Memo. in Table below) shows that the share of the private sector has turned out to be significantly higher than what was projected (with the gap declining in recent Plans). It is hoped that this is repeated in the Eighth Plan period, broadly in the direction indicated in the sectoral projections. Indeed, private industry grapping with change required such direction and the planners have tried their role providing perspectives by 2007 AD.

Notes

1. R. Venkataraman, "Only Through Planning can the Poor be Served" (address to the Members of Parliament, July 21, 1992), *Mainstream*, August 1, 1992.
2. The Steering Groups set up numbered twenty and Working Groups one hundred and twenty, for different sectors/subjects/ policies for the Eighth Plan, 1990-95. These could not be repeated for the Eighth Plan, 1992-97, given the time constraint, but helped formulation of the Plan in progress in more than one way.
3. Indicated by the ratios of incremental import/export-GDP, foreign investment, foreign flow, and by the policies regarding them.
4. In terms of rising share of exports and imports in GDP, with the targetted growth rate of 13.6 and 8.5 per cent respectively, compared to 5.6 per cent of GDP, during 1992-97 (Plan, para 3.7.9 and 3.7.12).
5. While the projection of 5.6 per cent is based on the savings rate of 21.6 per cent, six per cent for 1997-2002 on 23.2 and 6.5 for 2002-2007 on 24.4 per cent, ICOR being 4.1, four and 3.9 respectively, both exogenously projected, rest worked out by the model (Plan, para 28.1).
6. The model alluded private sector investment simultations, broad sectoral investment projections attempted in the Eighth Plan; an initial outline of the required planning discussed in Nitish Sengupta and Kalyan Raipuria, "Eighth Plan and the Private Sector," *The Economic Times,* March 27, 1992.
7. Meaning that committed liabilities in respect to earlier Plan schemes also need a thorough review and shedding off, if not serving, any social purpose.
8. In view of the observed savings ratio of only 1.44 per cent compared to the target/desired ratio of over 2 per cent by 1997-98, negative 3.64 per cent in government sector compared to target/desired ratio of (-) 2.43 per cent (*Plan*, Table 3.9)
9. In terms of dependence on funds from the development financial institutions and the banking system, given low promoters' share.
10. French Planning Office, *The French Mixed Economy Experience*, November, 1991.
11. Meaning focus on selective fronts, with wide and long-term consequences.
12. See the *Newsletter* (Monthly) of Secretariat for Industrial Approvals (SIA), Ministry of Industry.
13. See Preface by the Deputy Chairman, *Eighth Five Year Plan,* June 18, 1992.
14. C. Rangarajan and J.K. Satia, "On the Goals and Mechanics of Replanning", *Economic and Political Weekly*, (Annual Number), February, 1978.
15. Discussed in detail in respect of the public sector, in the *Eighth Plan*, Vol. II, Chapter 19.
16. Complementary discussed in Kalyan Raipuria and Rajesh Mehta, "Role of Public and Private Sectors in India's Development: Selected Simulations from a Macro-econometric Model", *Economic and Political Weekly,* August 3-10, 1991.

Eighth Plan (1992-97) Projections of Investment/Outlays

Sector	*Share in GDP, 1991-92*	*Projected Growth Rate (%), 1992-97*	*Investment*			*Share of Private Sector in Total Investment*
			Public Sector *Centre, States & U.T.s*	*Private Sector*	*Total*	
1. Agriculture	27.7	3.1	52,000	96,800	148,800	65.0
2. Mining & Quarrying	2.0	8.0	28,500	11,100	39,600	38.0
3. Manufacturing	21.5	7.3	47,100	141,300	188,400	75.0
4. Construction	5.1	4.7	3300	17,240	20,540	84.0
5. Electricity, Gas and Water	2.4	7.8	92,000	10,120	102,120	9.9
6. Transport & Communications	7.1	6.6	74,200	39,710	113,910	47.8
7. Other Services	34.2	6.0	63,900	120,730	184,630	[illegible]
8. Total	100.0	5.6	361,000*	437,000	798,000	54.8

Memo. Item	*IV Plan (1969-74)*	*V Plan (1974-79) Blue Book*	*VI Plan (1980-85)*	*VII Plan (1985-90)*
Share of private sector in total investment :				
Projected	39.7	44.6	47.1	52.2
Actual (at current Prices)	60.3	56.6	53.3	55.1

* Corresponding outlay i.e. investment and current plan expenditure is projected at Rs. 434,100 crores.
Source: *Eighth Five Year Plan*, 1992-97, Tables 3, 14, 15 and 16.

We do not believe in a rigid autarchy, but we do want to make India self-sufficient in regard to her needs as far as this is possible. We want to develop international trade, importing articles which we cannot easily produce and exporting such articles as the rest of the world wants from us. We do not propose to submit to the economic imperialism of any other country or to impose our own on others. We believe that the nations of the world can co-operate together in building a world economy which is advantageous for all and in this work we shall gladly co-operate. But this economy cannot be based on the individual profit motive, nor can it subsist within the framework of imperialist system. It means a new world order, both politically and economically, and free nations co-operating together for their own as well as the larger good.

Jawaharlal Nehru

(October 4, 1940)

Sah Brothers

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IMF Guided Exercise for Multinationals & Middle Class

KISHOR C. SAMAL

The International Monetary Fund put some conditionalities on the borrowing member-countries. The important conditions imposed by the IMF on India for its loan have been satisfied by India since mid-1991 through various policy pronouncements relating to liberalisation and privatisation. In line with the IMF conditionality, the 1992-93 Union Budget had also opened up the economy by various measures, such as partial convertibility of the rupee, delicencing of all imports, permission of foreign investment in the Indian capital market, critical infrastucture and others.[1] The 1993-94 Budget has moved further in this direction of liberalisation and privatisation.

The IMF has to be satisfied about the government fulfilling the macro-economic targets before releasing an instalment. It is to be pointed out that the instalment due against the fulfilment of the macro-economic targets for the end-June 1992 period was withheld as the government failed to meet them. The June 1992 instalment was released alongwith the September 1992 instalment, after a high level IMF team reviewed the targets in October 1992 and was satisfied that the end-September 1992 targets had been met.

However, the IMF has released the February 1993 instalment of its stand-by loan to India amounting to $ 316 million on February 18, 1993 after the Fund found that the Government of India had fulfilled all the five macro-economic targets stipulated under the stand-by loan agreement. The five main macro-economic targets which the government fulfilled by end-December 1992 are:

(i) net domestic assets of Reserve Bank of India (Rs 91,500 crores),
(ii) net RBI credit to the Central Government (Rs 99,400 crores),
(iii) Overall borrowing requirement of the Central Government or fiscal deficit (Rs 2600 crores),
(iv) short-term external debt (US $ 1.5 billion) and
(v) net official foreign exchange reserve (US $ 1.6 billion).

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The other indicative targets fixed by the IMF which are satisfied are: (i) coal price rise, (ii) reduction of subsidies, (iii) rise in sugar price in PDS, and (iv) rise in railway freight and fare. The 1993-94 Union Budget has also satisfied some of the indicative targets towards liberalisation and privatisation.

I

Multinationals

The measures taken in the 1993-94 Budget such as (i) unification of exchange rate, (ii) reduction in custom duties, (iii) withdrawal of deduction allowed under Section 80M of the IT Act, (iv) reduction as well as abolition of excise on certain consumer goods, and (v) other incentives to FIIs are to favour the multinationals which is the hidden motive of the IMF.

1. Unification of Exchange Rate[2] & Liberalisation of Foreign Exchange Rules:

Under the Liberalised Exchange Rate Management system (LERMS), introduced in the 1992-93 Union Budget, the dual rate was prevalent. Forty per cent of the proceeds of exports and inward remittance was purchased at the official rate of exchange by the RBI for official use. All other receipts and payments were converted at the market rate of exchange.

But unification of exchange rate was advocated on the ground that dual exchange rate amounts to a tax on export at seven per cent since the selling rate of the US dollar was seven per cent lower than that of the buying rate. So it was argued that the dual exchange rate system discriminates against exporters because the US dollars that they earn, fetches them fewer rupees than the amount they have to pay for the US dollars they need to buy imported inputs.

It must be noted that the dual exchange rate (or partial convertibility) cannot be viewed as a simple export tax since exporters are compensated for the US dollars that the government buys.

Second, non-government importers were also adversely affected in the dual rate regime.

However, the 1993-94 Budget eliminated the dual rate arrangement more due to the pressure of the IMF than the pressure of exporters. The unification of exchange rate is in line with the demand made by potential foreign investors. Under the new system, all exporters as well as other foreign exchange earners such as workers abroad are allowed to convert 100 per cent of their earnings at the market rate. All imports have to be paid for at the market rate.

Before the introduction of the unification of exchange rate, there were two rates: official and open market rate. For example, on February 26, 1993 while the offical exchange rate was Rs 26.32 per US dollar the market rate was Rs 33.06. But after the unification of exchange rate on February 27, 1993, on the first day of trading on March 2, 1993, the rupee stood at Rs 32.00 per US dollar at the close of trading and Rs 31.86 on March 3, 1993. Though in the initial stage the rupee is stronger in the open market, the rupee will weaken later in the year. Towards the end of the year, the demand and supply positions will start changing and much will depend on how exports pick up and how much foreign investment comes in.

Certain conditions should be satisfied for the unification of exchange rate. The Rangarajan Committee had set out three preconditions for a full float of the rupee: (i) comfortable level of foreign exchange reserves; (ii) a low-enough rate of inflation; and (iii) a mechanism through which the government could pass on the changes in the prices of imported goods to the consumers. The other conditions which should have been satisfied before the unification of exchange rate are: improvement in fiscal situation and export front, rise in foreign investment inflow and cost-efficiency of the Indian industry. Without these conditions the long-term effect will be adverse. The unification of exchange rate was introduced mainly to increase the confidence of the international capital markets thereby helping inflow of foreign capital. However, in the long-term the adverse effect of the unification of exchange rate will be felt.[3]

First, current account convertibility may result in substantial unemployment and idle capacity, if the products of the domestic enterprises are extensively abandoned in favour of imported goods and services. This may happen in India due to the aggressive sales of the multinationals with their conventional tricks of dumping in the background of liberalisation of imports and drastic reduction of customs duties on a large number of items.

Second, there is the risk of capital flight and greater volatility in exchange rates, external reserves or interest rates due to capital account convertibility (of course, not introduced in the Budget). Lack of confidence in a country's economic programme could generate strong pressure on the exchange rate; which, in turn, complicates the efforts of a country to achieve macro-economic stability.

Thus some conditions, as mentioned earlier, should be satisfied before or at the same time of the introduction of convertibility because macro-economic stability and micro-economic incentives are very essential to the success of convertibility (or the unification of exchange rate).

But these factors have not been properly taken into consideration while introducing the unification of exchange rate in the 1993-94 Union Budget. A unified exchange rate regime is expected to push up the overall cost of all bulk imports as the single floating exchange rate (Rs 32 per US dollar on March 2, 1993) is higher than the previous official exchange ~~rate (Rs~~ 26.32 per US dollar in February 1993). The imports of defence equipments, petroleum products, food and fertilisers will be particularly affected. For instance, the unified exchange rate will put a burden of Rs 2500 crores on the oil pool account in a full year.[4] Normally a unified exchange rate should have increased the rupee price of imported petroleum products, defence equipments, food and fertilisers by more than 20 per cent. However, external factors such as fall in the world price of crude oil and global interest rate may have a soothening impact on the import cost of these items.

But since there is no budgetary provision in the 1993-94 Union Budget for a higher rupee cost on government imports of these goods as a result of the unified exchange rate, the estimated budgetary deficit will be far higher in a full year having an adverse effect on the general price level.

Besides the full float of the Indian rupee, continuing the trend of liberalisation the Reserve Bank of India announced further relaxation in exchange control regulations on February 27, 1993 relating to travel abroad, FERA companies, non-resident investors and overseas companies.

Thus the unification of exchange rate and relaxation in exchange control regulations—one of the conditions of the IMF—will help the multinationals and foreign institutional investors (FIIs), while adversely affecting the Indian economy.

2. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs):

The foreign institutional investors wanted a lower rate of tax on short-term capital gains and this has been provided in the 1993-94 Union Budget with a cut in the tax rate from 65 to 30 per cent. Such investors at present are liable to tax 20 per cent on investment income and 10 per cent on long-term capital gains.

Though foreign institutional investors were given tax relief as desired by them, the tax concession earlier enjoyed by the domestic corporate sector under Section 90M of the Income Tax Act were withdrawn in the Budget to help the FIIs. Of course, some of the budgetary measures like (i) unification of exchange rate; (ii) reduction in maximum interest rate on bank deposits from 12 to 11 per cent, and minimum lending rate on commercial advances from 18 to 17 per cent; (iii) a five-year tax holiday for new industrial undertakings in the backward States and for generation of power and units in software technology park; (iv) reduction of excise duty on a large number of capital goods and instruments to a uniform rate of 10 per cent and for the power sector to five per cent; and (v) reduction in custom duties in certain items will please the domestic corporate sector.

Moreover, reduction in excise on white and consumer goods will help consumer durable industries having excess capacity and reduction of excise on various types of yarn and fibre will be beneficial for the textile industry. The budgetary measures relating to export credit and drastic reduction in excise will help the industries engaged in export and automobile sector respectively. Of course, export performance depends on various factors such as quality of goods, the protectionist policy of the developed countries, price elasticities, quota restrictions, etc.

Thus, some of the indirect tax relief measures and others in favour of domestic corporate sector may be beneficial to a few select industries, provided they are able to stand against the competition from foreign goods on the background of drastic reduction in customs duties and import liberalisation. In general, the expectations of the domestic industrial sector have not materialised. The domestic corporate sector's demands[5] such as (i) reduction of corporate tax to 35 per cent; (ii) withdrawal of 15 per cent surcharge on tax; (iii) restoration of depreciation allowance rate to 33.33 per cent from 25 per cent; (iv) withdrawal of wealth tax levy on companies; (v) procedural changes in treatment of capital gains arising from demergers and in treatment of export profit; (vi) introduction of a comprehensive VAT, and carry backward of losses which envisages refund of income tax during loss-making years have not been taken into consideration in the Union Budget.

Of course, some of the proposals made by the Industry Ministry before the Union Finance Minister relating to rationalisation of excise, reduction of custom duties and automobile sector have been accepted; and the Commerce Ministry's suggestions relating to full convertibility, excise and custom procedures, laws and duties, software exports, interest tax on export credit and export duty on granite have been conceded. However, most of the expectations of the domestic corporate sector, in spite of favourable support from the Commerce Ministry, the Industry Ministry and the Chelliah Committee Report, have not materialised.

In consequence, the capital market has been depressed after the presentation of Union Budget on February 27, 1993. In the post-budget session on the same day, the Bombay Stock Exchange's 30-share Sensitive Index lost by about 159 points on March 2, 1993, and by a further 81 points on March 3, 1993. At present, it is sliding down even more.

The government could be intentionally wanting to deflate the capital market to attract foreign institutional investors (FIIs) since the government is heavily dependent on the inflow of foreign funds. For this perhaps there is no change in the corporate tax rate to make the entry of FIIs easier particularly when the latter have been complaining of the high profit-earning ratios of most Indian companies. Another measure in the 1993-94 Union Budget which depressed the capital market as it is against the domestic corporate sector and which is helpful to FIIs, is withdrawal of deduction allowed under Section 80M of the Income Tax Act in respect of dividend income from UTI-US-64 accruing to domestic companies. Now the US-64 of the UTI will not be attractive for the domestic companies and most of them will most probably liquidate their holdings to the tune of around Rs 5000 crores. For this reason the Unit Trust of India (UTI) will not be able to intervene and prop up the stock market which is sliding, which is what the Finance Minister wants, as he has revealed in his Budget to woo FIIs.

The reliefs to FIIs have not only been given in the 1993-94 Budget but have been offered sinice 1991. The policy towards foreign investment was liberalised in 1991 to permit automatic approval for foreign investment upto 51 per cent equity in 34 industries. The Foreign Investment Promotion Board was also set up to process applications in cases not covered by automatic approval. During 1992-93 several additional measures were taken to encourage foreign investment flows. These measures are related to (i) dividend-balancing condition, (ii) foreign direct investment in certain priority sectors, (iii) NRIs and Overseas Corporate Bodies in high-priority industries, real estate, housing, infrastructure, etc.; (iv) liberalisation of FERA provisions; (v) protection of foreign investors and trade marks of foreign companies.[6] Due to this liberalisation and encouragement to foreign investors 2154 foreign collaboration proposals including 894 cases with foreign equity participation were approved by the Union Government in the period between August 1991 and December 1992. The total value of equity in these approved foreign investment proposals is Rs 42.9 billion which is more than three times the foreign investment approved in the last decade (1981-90).

3. Reduction in Customs Duties

The Budget proposed to reduce the maximum rate of customs duty from 110 per cent to 85 per cent except for a few items including passenger baggage and alcoholic beverage. There have also been reduction and rationalisation of customs duties on project and general machinery, capital goods and specified items for select industries, various items of machinery used for agriculture and allied sectors and other goods which will help the multinationals to enter the Indian product markets in a big way with their tactic of dumping in the initial stage of ruin the domestic enterprises.

Moreover, allowing foreign investment in coal, power, petroleum refinery sectors, and reducing the import duty from 30 per cent to 25 per cent on projects in case of coal mining and petroleum refinery and from 30 per cent to 20 per cent in case of power projects and machinery required for modernisation and renovation of power plants will offer double benefits to transnationals and foreign investors in this critical infrastructure area. On the other hand, the loss of revenue to the national exchequer is Rs 3273 crores for the entire restructuring of customs duties.

II

Upper Middle Class

In both the spheres of direct and indirect tax, the upper middle class has been offered various reliefs, while no innovative measure has been taken in the 1993-94 Budget for the poor and lower-income group.

In the sphere of direct tax, steps like rise in standard deductions for salary income, exemption of the value of one residential house and urban land held on stock-in-trade from the levy of wealth tax and rise in exemption limit for the purpose of gift tax in respect of marriage of relatives are beneficial to the upper middle class and the rich.

Similarly, when there is no relief in case of wage goods, various reliefs from taxation in the form of full exemption of reduction in excise on a large number of luxury and semi-luxury articles used by the upper middle class and very rich such as coffee, tea, instant tea, vanaspati, evaporative coolers, electric fans, specified domestic electrical appliances, dry cell batteries, radio sets, tooth powder, noodles, roasted cereals, biscuits, plastic moulded luggages, mattress and bedding articles of cellular rubber, cosmetics and toiletry preparations like talcum powder, face cream, shaving creams, are offered in this year's Budget.

Moreover, excise relief on most of these consumer products will help the multinationals operating inside the country since few of them have virtual monopoly over these goods particularly tea, coffee, cosmetics, toiletry, biscuits, roasted cereals and noodles, vanaspati, tooth powder and other consumer products. For instance, reduction in excise duty on consumer items only will give substantial benefit of the additional profit of Rs 25 crores to an Indian subsidiary of the British-Dutch multinationals; as mentioned by its chairman.

The other budgetary measures relating to excise will not only benefit the high-income group and upper middle class but also the concerned industries for their survival, as mentioned by the Finance Minister in his Budget speech. These measures are drastic reduction in excise duty on motor cars, colour TV, refrigerator and air conditioner. The loss of revenue due to change in excise duty is Rs 2249 crores.

The 1993-94 Union Budget has not given any relief to the common man. On the other hand, on the dictat of the IMF, railway freight rates for commodities including the 12 exempted earlier is being increased by 10 per cent for a distance upto 500 kilometres and 12 per cent for about 1500 kilometres and above in the 1993-94 Railway Budget. Exemptions from freight increases on grains, pulses, sugar, diesel and oil cakes have been withdrawn. The impact of the new, freight hike works out to be 20 paise per kilogram on sugar, 15 paise per kilogram on wheat, and 2.5 paise per litre on kerosene; the burden of which will mostly fall on the common man. Moreover, before the Budget the prices of wheat and sugar in public distribution system was also increased.

III

Privatisation

Privatisation is another important condition of the IMF for assistance. Accordingly, the government has encouraged the private sector in the areas of power generation, telecommunication and roads. The 1993-94 Budget proposes to allow the nationalised commercial banks to raise funds in the capital market to meet their shortfall in capital requirements over the next three years. It is to be mentioned that the liberalised process in the banking sector started from last year's budget on the basis of the recommendations of the Narasimhan Committee on financial reform and also in line with the Basle Committee norms.

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Immediately the State Bank of India is in a position to raise fresh equity since it already has small private share holdings. The other nationalised banks can raise fund in the capital market after the necessary legislative amendments allowing private shareholding in the public sector banks. The Finance Minister has also promised, in his Budget speech, to bring similar reform in the insurance sector aimed at introducing a more competitive environment, by allowing the multinationals entry in this sector.

IV

THUS the 1993-94 Union Budget is in line with the IMF conditionality with more liberalisation for foreign institutional investors, relaxation in exchange rate, rationalisation and reduction in customs and excise duties more privatisation in infrastructure, banking and insurance sector, cut in fiscal deficit and promise of introduction of VAT and further cut in corporate tax rate next year.

The IMF has generally approved the Budget as a good enough basis for successfully negotiating a follow-up medium-term financing arrangement with India. Being satisfied with the Budget, the IMF may extend assistance under an Extended Fund Facility, after the expiry of the existing stand by loan, with further conditionality which aill further help the entry of the multinationals in both the capital and product markets. ■

Notes and References

1. For details see Kishor C. Samal, "Union Budget: Role of Interest Groups", *Mainstream,* Vol. XXX, No. 24, April 4, 1992.
2. We have used the term "unification of exchange rate" instead of "full convertibility" because "full convertible currency is one which any holder is free to convert at market exchange rates—fixed or flexible—into one of the major international reserve currencies". Currency convertibility implies the absense of restrictions on foreign exchange transaction See *IMF Survey,* Vo. 20, No. 13.
3. See *IMF Survey,* Vol. 20, No. 13.
4. See *The Economic Times,* Culcutta, February 28, 1993. Even the Finance Minister admitted that the unified exchange rate had imposed an additional burden on the Budget on account of higher official import cost which could be around $ 500 million, *The Economic Times,* Calcutta, March 4, 1993.
5. *The Economic Times,* Calcutta, January 29, 1993, "Corporate Dossier".
6. For details, see Government of India, *Economic Survey, 1992-1993.*

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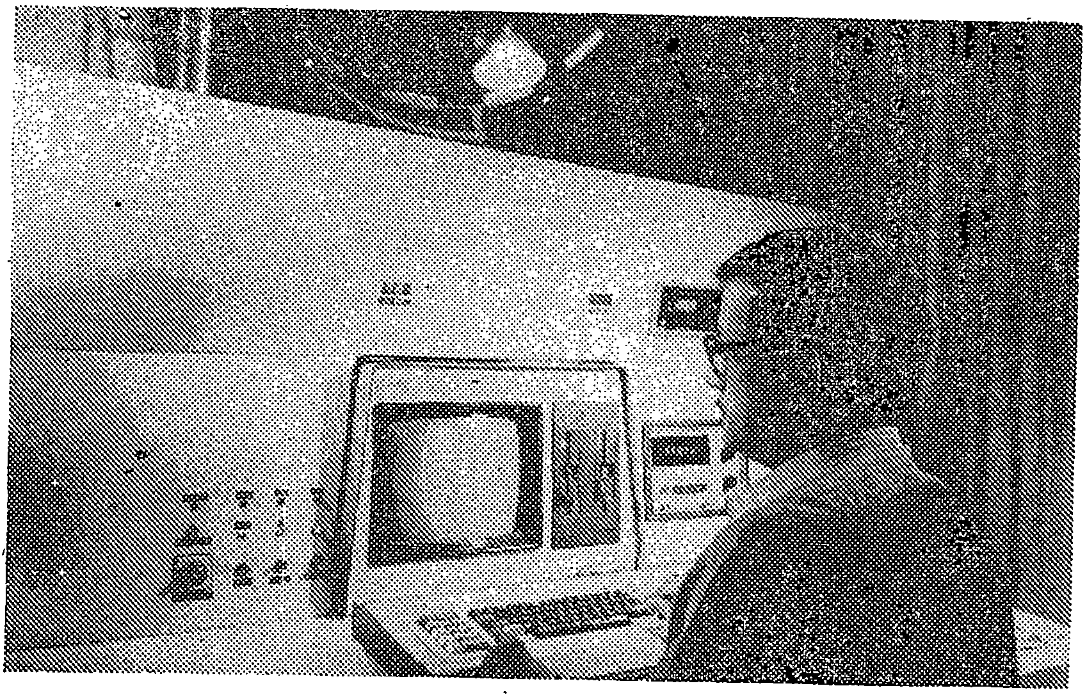

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Shadow over 'Shining Path' and Politics of the Underground

AJAY DARSHAN BEHERA

Latin America is a classic case of a bountiful land inhabited by impoverished people. There seems to be no end to their problems; and even today they are confronted with serious social, economic and political problems. After long years of having freed themselves of imperialistic yoke, industrialisation is only at a nascent stage of development; levels of literacy and standards of public health abysmally low. Massive poverty is a common feature of all the societies. The political processes have been undermined and personalities rather than parties have played an important role in politics. Despite the existence of a dominant peasant population the fact is that this section does not have a voice and is mostly ruled by exploitative and oppressive regimes.

It is not surprising that in these conditions of social reality, throughout its history Latin America has suffered more than its fair share of political violence. Violent confrontation between the social and political forces has led to chronic instability. Taking advantage of this situation, and in the guise of restoring order in a disordered society, military regimes have intervened frequently.

This social reality gives rise to various kids of conflicts. Unfortunately, the only way the state tries to resolve these conflicts is by counter-violence and oppression.

◆

PERU is no exception to this social reality. In fact in Peru there are two Perus, divided along class, race and geography. A major proportion of the population consisting of enserfed Indians—speaking the *Quechua* language—live in the backward impoverished highlands of the Andes. On the other hand, the politically dominant White and Spanish speaking *Mestizo*, comprising of only twelve per cent of the population, lives in the coastal lands, centred round Lima, the capital city, which has been the determinant of politics in Peru. Peru's wealth and resources have been accumulated by the Whites and the underpriveleged communities have been geographically, economically and politically marginalised. Cynthia McClintock, an expert on Peru, makes this observation about life in the sourthern highlands:

> Peru's southern highlands are a region in a Thrid-World country where poverty is at Fourth-World levels. People in the southern highlands earn little, die young, are mostly illiterate, and usually exist without basic human services.[1]

The class division in Peru also overlaps the subcultural cleavage—between the *Catholics* and the *Incans*. The Spanish conquerors of Peru, who dominated Peru for centuries, left behind an autocratic political tradition—because of which democracy has never thrived there. Unrepresentative governments, extreme disparities of wealth, and rigid class and social distinctions have precluded the entry of new social and political forces from exercising power. In these circumstances the only hope of the poor to better their condition comes through overthrowing the existing structures—and it is among this depressed section of society that guerrilla groups always look for support.

This is the socio-political and economic history in which the *Shining Path* (*Sendero Luminoso*) emerged. Mario Vargas Losa, the well-known Peruvian novelist, recently writing in the *Time* magazine sums up this history and its contribution to the birth of the *Shining Path*:

> The reasons lie in a history that began almost five centuries ago with the trauma of the Spanish conquest. It established a hierarchical division in Peruvian society between a small, Westernised, prosperous elite and an immense miserable mass of people of Indian origin whom the elite mercilessly exploited...In Peru there are two nations, almost impervious to each other, living together in tense and distrustful enmity...Peru is a rich country because of its natural resources...but the majority of Peruvians have always been poor. Over the past 30 years that condition worsened; by the hundreds of thousands, Peruvians became paupers and sank into a

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chasm of desperation that made some of them deceptive to the *Shining Path*'s nihilistic and self-destructive message.[2]

Origin and Evolution

The *Sendero Luminoso* emerged in a specific set of socio-economic and political conditions.

The problems of the southern highlands have never been of much consequence to the Peruvian rulers. Agrarian reforms, both under military and civilian regimes, have disadvantaged the peasantry of the southern highlands. The failure of the agrarian reforms of 1969, carried out under the military regimes of General Velasco Alvarado and the agricultural policies of Fernando Belaundes Terry, elected in 1980, transformed land tenure and terms of trade, which hit the peasantry hard.[4] The rising rate of growth of population complicated matters and increased demographic pressure on land.

The decade of the 1960s was witness to massive student unrest and protest all over the world. The universities had been converted into major centres of Left-wing activity during the 1960s and the 1970s. This had its reflection in Peru as well. The politicised students of the University of Huamanga were looking for radical alternatives to the political weakness of the Left at the time.[5]

On the political front, the Sino-Soviet split had its repercussions on the Left parties, as it did elsewhere. A Maoist faction broke away from the Communist Party in 1964 criticising the Communist Party's new doctrine of "peaceful transition to socialism". Abimael Renoso Guzman, the founder of the *Sendero Luminoso*, was a part of this Maoist party called the *Bandera Roja* (Red Flag). He and his band of followers adhered to a long-term strategy based on the Chinese experience. They also used the Marxist theory to understand the Peruvian reality, following in the footsteps of Jose Carlos Mariategui,[6] a Peruvian intellectual who founded the original Communist Party of Peru in 1928. Guzman was expelled after difference arose between him and the leadership of the *Bandera Roja*. He founded the *Sendero Luminoso* in 1970 at the University of Huamanga in Ayacucho and the name of the party was adopted from a statement by Mariategui that "Marxism-Leninism will open the shining path to revolution".[7] The party was known as the Communist Party of Peru in the Shining Path of Mariategui, commonly known as *Sendero Luminoso* only.

Ideological Orientations

Guzman, originally from the town of Arequipa, left it in 1961. Born in 1934 into a middle class family, he grew up to secure two doctoral degrees—one on Kant's "Theory of Space" and the second one on "The Bourgeois Democratic State". He joined as a Professor of Philosophy in the Department of Education at the University of Huamanga in 1963. However, he gave up his teaching post in the mid-1970s and withdrew to rural Ayacucho.[8]

Most of the *Sendero Luminoso*'s ideology and world view revolves around the thoughts of Guzman. He is central to the organisation and holds it together through a National Directorate and a Central Committee. Because of Guzman's authority and control over the movement's leadership and the leaders, undoubtedly it had fallen victim to the cult of personality, as did the regimes of Stalin and Mao. And, within the organisation he was referred to as the "Fourth Sword of Marxism", after Marx, Lenin and Mao. The *Sendero Luminoso* had in fact tried to build a world movement based on "Marxism-Leninism-Maoism-Gonzalism".[9]

Guzman had deliberately kept his organisation in isolation from the established Left. This was based on an understanding that the Leftist groups with urban bases could not reach out to the proletariat[10] or the peasantry. He had also isolated his organisation from the international socialist movement and was harshly critical of the Soviets, the Cubans and also of Deng Xiaoping's China by dubbing them as "social imperialists" and "revisionists".[11] Because of this stand the *Sendero Luminoso* could not evolve any understanding of a united opposition front alongwith the other Left groups of Peru. Guzman decried the established Left as "parliamentary cretins" and the radical Left like *Tupac Amaru* as "objective allies of reaction".[12]

However, this did not mean that he did not believe in "proletarian internationalism". His internationalism was moderated by the history and social reality of Latin America. The *Sendero Luminoso*'s ideology is an outgrowth of the Indian experience in Peru. It is a synthesis of the Maoist view of proletarian revolution with the beliefs of the ethnic Indians.[13] It seeks to establish a "new state of workers and peasants" through violent revolution. Basing itself on Mariategui's work it believes that Peruvian socialism would be based on the traditional Indian populations.

May be, one does not know, this line of thinking was meant to give the *Sendero Luminoso* a broader support base than it could think of garnering if it stuck to its narrow political ideology.[14] Guzman was hopeful that the socialist revolution in Peru would ultimately encompass the *Quechua*-speaking people of Bolivia, Columbia, Ecuador, Argentine and Chile. Thus, the *Sendero Luminoso*'s goal included a broader "Latin American revolution uniting the *Quechua* nation in a new socialist state".[15]

The *Sendero Luminoso*'s ideology and strategy were built up on a careful understanding and analysis of Peruvian society. Its belief that a democratic political structure could evove only through an armed struggle is based on eight theses:[16]

1. Peru is a dependent, semi-colonial, semi-feudal country, in which the peasantry is the main potentially revolutionary force and the countryside the site of the principal contradiction.
2. In a country like Peru there cannot be democracy or even bourgeois institutions except in caricature.
3. The military regimes that ruled Peru from 1978 to 1980 were fascist. The Beluande Government is attempting to assure the further development of bureaucratic captialism and the corporate state.
4. From 1968 to 1980 Peru was in a situation of statemated revolution but since 1980 is in a situation of unfolding revolution which present the people with a choice between the democratic road and the 'bureaucratic road'.
5. The revolution does not build its strength in a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country by participating in the electoral process or utilising bourgeois legality. Those Leftist forces that attempt this are opting for 'bureaucratic cretinism'. The only true leftist force is built by armed struggle.
6. The Peruvian must be rational and democratic, anti-imperialist and anti-feudal. Its social base is the worker-peasant alliance, but the peasants are the principal motor force while the proletariat is being formed and developing into a leading class.
7. The only form of revolutionary struggle to take power and form the new democratic state is armed struggle. People's war starts in the country and advances to the city. 'The people's war is a peasant war or it is nothing.'
8. The party is forged and developed in the course of the armed struggle and, as a political organisation, seeks to convert the armed struggle into a true people's army.

Support Base

The *Sendero Luminoso*'s support in the initial years came primarily from two sections—the impoversished peasantry and the radicalised university students.

Peru's southern highlands dominated by the rural peasantry was its stronghold, especially the Ayacucho area. It is significant why Ayacucho provided the strongest support base to the *Sendero Luminoso*. Out of Peru's twentyfour departments Ayacucho is the most backward. In Ayacucho, the literacy rate is only about 20 per cent—the lowest in Peru. The per capita income is as low as $ 60 annually, which is less than one-tenth of that for Peru as a whole.[17] The peasants in this region comprising of Indians, with small holdings and marginalised in the capitalist market economy, gave the *Sendero Luminoso* considerable support.[18] And later, in the early 1980s, the southern highlands of Ayacucho became the heartland of the *Sendero Luminoso*'s guerrilla activity.

This support as it is did not come naturally or overnight. Unlike the other revolutionary groups of the 1960s, the *Sendero Luminoso* was committed to intensive long-term political work in the countryside. Its support and activity among the peasants over a period of time built a basis of trust and faith.[19] Guzman himself after giving up his post in the University of Huamanga lived and worked amongst the Indians for a long time.

And all along it never tried to win the support of the urban proletariat.[20]

On the other hand, there are experts who believe that the *Sendero Luminoso* had a limited base. Carlos Ivan Degregori, an expert on the *Sendero Luminoso,* has concluded:

> They can win sectors of the peasantry, but only by imposition and that is quite another thing. Sendero is not a peasant movement but a movement of intellectuals and young people without hope.[21]

Though there does seem to exist some evidence that the *Sendero Luminoso*'s support was primarily amongst the Indian pesantry of the southern highlands, yet it is difficult to assess that strength. According to certain constructs on political violence and the role of peasantry in it, it does seem that the poor pesantry with small land-holdings would be more prone to violent action and radical change than the peasantry with large land-holdings.[22] Hence the agrarian structure of Ayacucho and its inaccessibility to the government authorities was one of the important factors in the rebelliousness of the pesantry in this region.

The *Sendero Luminoso* initially emerged from the confines of the university. The radicalisation of young university students in the late 1960s and early 1970s was a global phenomena. In many Third World countries, university students had taken up the mantle of the leadership of the more radical Left parties in Opposition to the

Left parties which had adopted parliamentary democratic methods. The *Sendero Luminoso* was established in opposition to the parliamentarism of the established Left. In Ayacucho, the young university radicals worked in close cooperation with the peasantry and built up a strong alliance.[23]

Beyond this alliance, the *Sendero Luminoso* had sympathisers in unknown quarters; sections who were opposed to its violence, were in agreement with its critique of Peruvian institutions and inequities. Regional support for the *Sendero Luminoso* also came from a feeling of disgust and anger at the neglect of the region by the Central Government and the brutal and arbitrary nature of repression against any form of protest.[24]

Strategy and Tactics

The *Sendero Luminoso's* strategy is not much different from the Maoist strategy of guerrilla warfare. Revolution was to be achieved by a prolonged popular war starting from the countryside and then finally encircling the cites. Rural areas were to be the principal theatre for guerrilla warfare. In this regard the *Sendero Luminoso* had developed five distinct stages of armed struggle. Briefly the stages are:[25]

1. Gathering support in the backward areas,
2. Assault on the symbols of the bourgeois state,
3. Initiating guerrilla warfare,
4. Conquering new areas and expansion of support,
5. Laying seige to the cities and causing the collapse of the state.

The first stage of the *Sendero Luminoso's* strategy was accomplished between 1968 and 1980. The leadership publicly committed itself to an armed struggle in 1979. It moved to the second stage of its strategy between 1980 and 1982; and to the third and more violent stage in March 1982 with a massive attack on a jail in Ayacucho releasing all prisoners, including over fifty suspected *Sendero Luminoso* members.[26]

While Latin America has a longstanding tradition of both rural and urban guerrilla warfare—in theory as well as practice—there is no documented evidence to suggest whether Guzman believed that Guevara's *foco* stragey would be applicable to Peru. However, *Sendero Luminoso's* strategy does seem to have shades of Guevara's *foco* strategy. According to this strategy, the organisation of popular support was not necessary, and that a tiny guerrilla *foco* had only to confront a reactionary regime for the people to rise spontaneously and overthrow it.[27] Ironically, so far this strategy had worked only in Cuba, and also to a certain extent in Nicaragua. It has failed in the other Latin American countries. In order to correct the lacunas of the *foco* strategy, when rural guerrillas were rooted out in Brazil in 1967-69, despite being in an advantageous position, Carlos Marighella added the urban component to rural guerrilla warfare. He stressed that the decisive war will eventually be won in the rural areas, and the aims of the urban guerrilla must be to draw the armed forces into the cities to allow the rural guerrillas to develop their strength.[28]

It is interesting to note here that the *Sendero Luminoso's* strategy had two distinct categories—one, a rural insurgency; and two, urban subversion and terrorism as a complement to its rural warfare.[29] The second category was a definite influence of Marighella. The tactics adhered to in this was to be a selective terrorist campaign in the cities. Anything representing power, class or privilege was to be targeted. The ideal behind urban terrorism would be to provoke repression from the state.

Evidently, the third stage of the *Sender Luminoso's* strategy has not been a success so far. And with the capture of Guzman recently, at this stage it would be hard to make any pronouncements on the fifth stage.

Sender Luminoso and Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna: A Brief Comparison

Every movement has its unique characteristics due to the fact that it emerges out of a specific social reality. In that sense the *Sendero Luminoso* is unique. However, the Latin American context is familiar and replicable in some other Third World settings. This may be the reason that in the South Asian subcontinent, the Sri Lankan situation has given rise to a similar movement.[30] Though there can be no comparison in *toto*, nevertheless, interesting resemblances can be discerned.

The *Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna* (JVP) in Sri Lanka which originated in the 1960s due to a split in the Left movement, emerged in a similar context as the *Sendero Luminoso*. Its ideological understanding and strategic planning almost followed similar patterns like the *Sendero Luminoso*. However, one area where there are a significant difference is in their support base.

The JVP originated as a result of a split in the pro-Chinese Communist Party of Sri Lanka. As the established Leftist parties became absorbed in the parliamentary process and power sharing, their appeal as revolutionary parties to the radical youth waned. The dissatisfaction with the traditional Left was due to various reasons. The two most significant reasons were—one, their support base was limited only to the urban working class; and two, the peasantry was completely neglected by the Left parties.[31] Rohana Wijeweera, the founder-leader of the JVP, was able to take a sizeable section of the youth with him when he left the Communist Party.

Like the *Sendero Luminoso*, the JVP's initial support base was mainly amongst the youth. The socio-educational policies in the 1950s and 1960s had led to heightened expectations in the students, and when this was not matched with commensurate employment prospects, it resulted in a sense of deprivation and disillusionment amongst the students.[32] Consequent loss of faith in the existing social order led to radicalisation of a significant section of the youth. This section was to form the backbone of the JVP. Though most of these youths came from the underprivileged class, dominantly from poor peasant families, the JVP's support amongst the peasantry was, however, very nominal. Of course, unlike the *Sendero Luminoso*, the JVP members never lived and worked amongst the peasantry to mobilise support.

Both the *Sendero Luminoso's* and the JVP's ideology centred round their founder-leaders. Like the *Sendero Luminoso*, the JVP too was a victim to the cult of personality of its leader. Its ideology had a superficial resemblance to Marxism-Leninism; however, its leaders claimed that their inspirations were Marx, Mao, Guevara and the indigenous traditions derived from Sinhalese Buddhism.[33] The JVP's economic programme was also based on an agrarian model—collectivisation was to be the solution to regularise land tenure.[34]

Unlike the *Sendero Luminoso's* strategy of protracted warfare from the coutryside, the JVP's initial strategy was termed as a 'one-day revolution'.[35] This was to be a short and swift attack on the state and power was to be captured within a short span of time. At a later stage the component of urban terrorism in their strategies has played a more important role. Even to the extent that their terrorist campaigns have also followed similar patterns.[36]

Conclusion

In Sri Lanka Wijeweera has been eliminated and in Peru Guzman has been captured. Since the ideology of both the organisations centred round their leaders besides having a centralised command structure, it is difficult to believe that they would be able to recuperate from their losses. However, even a few of the remaining cadres and their supporters could go on with their struggle as long as a perceived sense of deprivation exists.

In Peru, a lot would depend on the response of the state to the development problems of Ayacucho region. There is a need for massive socio-economic developmental programmes. Otherwise, there would be no end to the cycle of violence that Peru is facing today. Violence has become a way of life and a mode of expression in all forms of conflict. Would all this violence ever bring about the revolution? Unless the role of violence in armed struggle is properly understood, these groups would be always termed 'nihilistic'. Marxism-Leninism and 'nihilism' are not the two sides of the same coin.

The Marxist-Leninist tradition has had a profound influence on the organisations like the *Sender Luminoso* and the JVP. But it is difficult to accept the revolutionary character of these movements. They did not only deviate from the Marxist tenets but also distorted them to such an extent that they no longer conform to the Marxist-Leninist or even Maoist traditions. The utopian ideal of bringing about revolution without a mass movement is bound to collapse at some point of time.

The nature of these organisations—shrouded in secrecy, cut-off from the masses and overweeningly violent—is also a reflection on the nature of their politics. It can be termed nothing more than the politics of the underground. These organisations believe that the support of the masses would be forthcoming once the revolution comes about, and that it is not necessary to carry the masses along to achieve the revolution. The nature of their politics inhibits them from working with the masses and building up a base. That is why the *Sendero Luminoso* and the JVP may never be able to come to power even though they retain the potential to inflict severe damage to the state. ■

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Adjustment with Gender Equity

J. GEORGE

A high-level World Bank team, for a change, put the gender related issues to the fore to ensure that the adverse impact of structural adjustment and stabilisation of the economy did not fall squarely on activities concerning women and child welfare health, education and family welfare.

While treating women and children as merely a 'welfare' activity is highly obectionable, it would perhaps be refreshing to examine such attempts and pronouncements in the press which suggest that Adjustments with Gender Equity (AGE) is perhaps going to be the thrust area. The AGE-ing test, indeed, is going to be of a RARE breed, since the adjustment duet of stabilisation and structural policies, being orchestrated by the World Bank and the IMF, is to attain Resource Allocation by Reducing the role of government/state/bureaucracy and Enhancing the role of the market forces (RARE).

Genesis of terms apart, one is faced with uphill tasks against conceptual problems in respect of the AGE-ing test. However, one may initiate the AGE-ing test by asking the question: is it the gender equity dimension in particular and equity dimension in general which led to the Indian Government's failure in securing the $ 400 million loan committed by the International Development Agency (IDA) for the country's economic reforms programme? The available results (*Poineer,* October 25, 1992) on the surface may indicate that the answer is in the affirmative. This may surprise many advocates of effectiveness, especially in terms of costs, and of efficiency in all economic activities, as primary attainable goals of the adjustment package. One may point out three major sources for this surprise. All the three sources owe their allegiance to the economic hegemony and a senseless paradigm called "there is no alternative" (TINA).

First, is the attempt to reduce all economies into a sanitised water tight compartment by obliterating specificities of location, culture, history, level of industrialisation and extent of formal-informal dichotomy. Secondly, abstractions into a set of mathematical rules and theories are gainfully employed to marginalise the household and the community. Thus a proper manifestation of the role of human behaviour including cultural, gender and socio-economic relationships is made 'invisible'. Finally, the cloak of value-neutrality and objectivity are instruments which obscure a deeper probe into the structural sources, nature and consequences of economic inequity.

These sources, as is apparent, are by definition biased against women, by rendering them invisible. Therefore, the need is to develop a more inclusive notion of production, work and the economy. When we accord equity a paramount place, *inter-alia* we bring in a definition of productive activity taking account of all those activities that contribute to societal production and reproduction of goods and services and people. Expectedly, any equitable allocation of resources, in this revised norm, should first benefit and spur revision of the gender imbalance that exists in our society. Inasmuch as gender is a visible social construct rather than a biological construct, it is an important socio-economic variable to analyse roles, responsibilities, constraints, opportunities and incentives involved during the adjustment regimen.

At this juncture while it may not be advisable to debate whether or not adjustment should be carried out, one ought to be concerned at least about ways to make it less painful because equity considerations are always obscured. The disproportionate burden of the crisis created due to profligacy of the top three per cent of the population, however, needs to be underscored. And it is here that a view of gender equity becomes imminent not merely because women constitute about half of the population but they perform two-thirds of the hours worked though in official statistics it is recorded as working only one-thrid of these hours. It is also estimated that women receive one-tenth of the world's income and have one-hundredth of the world's property registered in their name.

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IN India, a majority of women workers (94 per

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cent) are concentrated in the unorganised sectors and low income groups. Despite such informal nature one could discern some order. Any rapid changes in the present regulatory mechanism, it is rightly feared, may indeed heighten the vulnerability of women primarily due to increasing unemployment and/or exploitation. Here exploitation may be understood as unequal wages for equal work among males and females, overt or covert barriers to entry or to upward mobility of female labour, unequal access of females to factors of production, to technology, to information and to social and family resources. Legal rights to property is yet another area gaining repeated articulation in the recent past.

Perhaps the standard response one is expected to hear to these issues is that the mandate for gender equality and non-discrimination in all state policies is provided by the Constitution of India. And that this mandate was translated into 'growth with equity and distributive justice' as a basic objective for the planning process. However, it is another matter that for the first time, beginning with the Sixth Five-Year Plan, women's development was given an independent section and thus established a gender sensitised process of change in the Plan document. Subsequently, however, this issue appears as a mere welfare activity in the Eighth Five-Year Plan document. Possibily women and child development have become sub-optimal issues in the reckoning of the planners as the country marches towards the twentyfirst century.

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Be that as it may, the most important question emerging here is how to bring about Adjustments with Gender Equity (AGE). For brevity, the answer lies in recognising HER GREATNESS. Borrowing the terminology from the Human Development Report, HER is for Human Expenditure Ratio which would indicate the share of national income earmarked for human priority concerns, say, women and child development. This priority concern, in turn, crucially depends on three relative terms. First, the share of the public expenditure in the national income followed by the share of social services in the total public expenditure. Thirdly, the percentage of social development sum allocated to human priority concern such as women and child development. Since HER is a product of all the three relative positions, temporal and spatial variations can be moderated by a judicious resource allocation strategy. Expectedly, the Human Expenditure Ratio (HER) for India is less than three per ccent which is very low in comparison to the scale value of more than five per cent in the high group. One can expect wide regional variations as well given the ground realities.

Now coming to the GREATNESS part, the full import of this generic adjective term lies in the plan of action aimed to establish her greatness. Whereas, Greater selectivity in public expenditure cuts and Restructuring of public sector activities may be a few of the necessary initial steps in a structural adjustment programme. What cannot be ignored are crucial issues like Emphasising on self-reliant food production system, Appropriate financial support and Technical skill assistance. Alongside, the social concerns often not figuring in the framework of any planner and policy-maker are the questions of Nurturance-domination duality for working towards Eradicating the seclusion ideology so widespread in every sphere. It is obvious that by ensuring a Strategic and central role to women's education one may attain the ultimate in Surfacing invisible and subsistence production.

The World Bank has recognised, though belatedly, that the most precious of all investments is on human resources. It will be a tragedy if, under the new economic reforms programme, HER GREATNESS gets short shrift. That will be sure prescription for failing the AGE-ing test. ■

BOOK REVIEW

Task of Population Education

NARESH SINGH PUNDEER

The realisation of the adverse impact of rapid population growth in India dates back to the early 1950s. Since then various strategies have been employed to arrest the rapid growth rate. But so far success on this front has been eluding us.

The major obstacle in attaining the demographic goals is the hesitation on the part of the people to accept the small family norm. Though the people by and large are aware of the small family norm, they seldom practice it because of various socio-economic, cultural and religious pressures. Unless there is a basic change in their attitudes and value orientation towards population issues, their behaviour will not promote the small family norm.

Population Education: A National Source Book, Vol.1 edited by C. Seshadri & J.L. Pandey, N.C.E.R.T. Publication, New Delhi; 1991; pp. XIII+404; Price not mentioned.

In order to effect desirable changes in their attitudes and value orientation, an educational innovation known as population education has emerged. It is being employed as an intervention strategy in more than 100 countries of the world, India included.

Since population education is in its early stage, there is a lack of materials on the theory, methods and subject matter of population education. Whatever is available is scattered in various reference books. In the book under review an attempt has been made to accumulate the knowledge about various aspects of population education: its concept, theory and method; the inter-relationship of population with socio-economic development, environment, health and nutrition; and the interface between population education, family life and sex education.

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BASICALLY this book has been written for teacher educators, teachers, researchers and textbook writers. But it is also useful for those persons who are engaged in adult education, university education, health and family welfare programmes and policy making. It contains eleven chapters which are grouped into seven sections. Though every section is based on a particular theme, all sections are in a sense inter-related.

The first section brings into focus the origin and development of population education and its recognition as a discipline. The first chapter of this section deals with the concept, theory, method and development of population education in general. In the second chapter the development of population education in India has been discussed with particular reference to the National Policy on Education 1986. It delineates *inter alia* the progress made under the National Population Education Programme (NPEP).

The first reference of the idea of population education is found in the book entitled, *Nation and Family,* written by Alva Myrdal in 1941 in the United States. In India the concept of population education received acceptance during the 1970s and concrete steps were initiated in 1980 when the NPEP was launched by the Government of India with financial assistance from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) and technical assistance from the UNESCO.

Population education tries to make the learners understand the concepts, theories and methods of demography in the context of the actual situation of population. It provides a rational and scientific approach to understand the causes and consequences of population growth and the inter-relationship between population and environment, socio-economic development, health and nutrition, status of women, poverty and quality of life. But the most important aspect of population education is to bring about changes in the behaviour and attitudes of young children towards the population situation so that they take informed decisions towards population issues for facilitating sustainable socio-economic development and better quality of life.

Under the NPEP attempts are being made to integrate population education in different textbooks of science, social science and languages through interdisciplinary approach. While doing

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this the mental level, age and ability of the schoolchildren are kept in view. The message of population education is being incorporated in environmental sciences, home science, geography, economics, civics, political science and sociology.

The second section deals with the analysis of population situation in the world, India and different States/UTs of India by using various statistical data and tables.

Both the chapters of third section are devoted to the relationship between population and development. The first chapter spells out the different aspects of population growth and socio-economic development in post-independence India. Though the rate of socio-economic development has increased after independence, it is not sufficient to fullfill the needs of the increasing population. We are still facing the problem of food, housing, drinking water and fuel. There is remarkable progress in education but about half of the total population is still illiterate. Those who are educated, are facing the problem of acute unemployment due to the population explosion. There is a need to control the population explosion, to make the positive relationship between population and development. The second chapter discusses the status of women, focussing on their growth, diet, health, fertility, working conditions, maternity and child care in relation to the population situation.

The fourth section delineates the population growth and its negative effect on environment and resources. One of the major reasons for the resource depletion and environmental degradation has been the rapid growth of population. Deforestation, soil erosion, flood and extinction of quite a few wild animals are putting a question mark on development. Air and water pollution, acid rain and depletion of ozone layer are attributed to the extensive use of chemical materials. Conservation of environment and resources are necessary for development. If the rate of population growth is checked, it would be easier to attain these goals.

Health and nutrition is the theme covered in the fifth section. The first chapter of this section reflects on the present health situation, policies and programmes and the status of health services in India. The second chapter deals with population and nutrition. It elaborates the factors responsible for the level of food and lack of proper guidence in diet for the child. The fertility, weight of the child and infant mortality are largely dependent upon food intake. Anaemia, night blindness, goitre and other related diseases take place due to the lack of food intake. The chapter also carries information about National Nutrition Programmes.

The need for family life education is another theme discussed in the sixth section. The first chapter deals with the problem of youth, physical and emotional changes during pre-adolescence age and oreintation towards opposite sex during adolescence: There is a need of proper counselling of the young people by the parents during this period. The second chapter deals with the method of family planning, biological structure of human reproductive system and sexually transmitted diseases like gonorrhea, syphilis, AIDS, etc.

The theme of relationship between population and education is covered in the last section. Education is directly related to the quality of life. There is a need to gear population education towards educational development and better quality of life. The aim of universalisation of primary education remains unrealised so far. Efforts are being made to initiate pre-primary education. To achieve these goals and to provide necessary schooling services and facilities available for the entire population, it is desirable among other things to ensure a planned growth of population.

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AT the end of these chapters there are five important appendices on various aspects of population education. The first appendix consists

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of a demographic glossary of important terms and concepts. The comparative statistical data on various aspects of population and development of India and State/UTs are given in the second appendix. Increasing consumer culture coupled with population explosion is resulting in environmental destruction in the name of development. Depletion of the ozone layer (due to the use of CFC product) is one of the consequences of this culture. The third appendix deals with the information about environmental and ecological implications of ozone layer. Amongst all these the fourth appendix is the most important, as it highlights some of the important research findings on population and nutrition. These findings are helpful in formulating proper policies of health and family welfare. These reflect the adverse effects of population growth on health and nutrition. The last appendix is on various aspects of the process of growing up, covering issues like development of body clock of both male and female. There are changes in emotions and socio-psychological and biological orientations according to the increase of age. It also elucidates the biological and psychological changes during the period of pregnancy and the necessary care to be taken during this period. The appendix provides important information to the readers on healthy physical and social development.

Bibliography on each section depicted separately will be helpful for those who are interested in population education research.

In fact it is a very significant publication brought out by the NCERT on population education, better quality of life and sustainable healthy development of society. The editors and authors are thankful for this. As indicated in the foreward and the introduction, one hopes the second volume would also be coming out very soon, so that the knowledge base is well supported by the pedagogical treatment of different aspects of population education. ■

NIKHIL : Smash the Mafia

(Continued from page 3)

patronage of some of the leading lights of Samajwadi Janata Party. The DMK and the ADMK leaders have often been reported as having involvement with smugglers and brewery magnates, and so are some of the Karnataka political leaders. During the Emergency, the drive against smugglers had to be toned down in Kerala because that might have led to the collapse of the house-of-cards coalition then in office. In distant Assam, the AGP leaders are often mentioned having amassed wealth through contractors. In the north-east, one of the Chief Ministers once confided to the present writer that in the social hierarchy of his State, the contractor came on top and then came the politician who sanctioned the contract. In Punjab, gun-totting militants are known to have close liaison with drug smugglers, which means big money. And in Rajasthan and Gujarat, politicians on the border districts can hardly be immune from the blandishments and blackmail of the brisk network of smugglers. Not everyone of our political leaders have the opening for kickbacks on arms deals, but that by no menas affect their intake of black money, of which the mafias more than any others provide the common channel.

Here is the ugly face of criminalisation of politics about which learned treatises in seminars are heard nowadays. It is, however, ominously significant that the Governor of Andhra Pradesh recently found himself in hot waters for having referred to this trend towards criminalisation of politics.

All this not only leads to corrosion of political life but opens up the opportunity for insidious forces from outside subverting the country's security and sovereignty. The recent bomb blasts in the two leading cities of the country make it abundantly clear that all this is not the mere prattle of scaremongers or Cassandras in our political life. This is a very real danger right here and now. The phenomenon of the ugly *mastan* has emerged in all its fearsome hideousness when explosions killed many an innocent citizen and brought down buildings in Bombay and Calcutta.

It is time for all political leaders, whether in office or in Opposition, and more importantly, the million-strong concerned citizens who constitute the silent majority of this great Republic of ours to come forward in a mighty crusade to weed out such deadly parasites from our public life. Let Parliament pass draconian laws and force the government to act. We have had enough of petty squabbles and false issues to deflect the public from this very urgent task of saving the polity of our country. A thousand dip in Surajkund this week shall bring no piety that one determined action against the *mastan* mafias can. If anything can unite the nation and cleanse our politics from the frightening pollution of today, it is only this that the time has come for exterminating the entire gang of such mafias. That will lead to the punishment of politicians who thrive with the support of such mafias. ■

NAZIRUL HASAN ANSARI : Bhagat Singh

(Continued from page 4)

responsibility of newspapers before charging them with dereliction of a sacred duty.

> .... The real duty of the newspapers is to educate, to cleanse the minds of people, take them out of the rut of narrow sectarian grooves of thought and perception, and to wash and scrap out communal feelings in order to invest them with feelings of amity and communal harmony, for bridging the gap and building mutual trust, bringing about real rapproachment for advancing the cause of common nationalism.
>
> ....But instead of it all, their main objective appears to have become spread of ignorance, proliferation and propagation of chauvinism and sectarianism—communalisation of people's mind for engendering group clashes and skirmishes. In this way they are working for destruction of India's common heritage and its composite culture—its common nationalism ....

How fully these words apply to the Indian print media of our own times, will have to be measured by mediamen themselves. What, however, bears pathetic resemblance to the overall situation of present-day India is Bhagat Singh's painful observation, in conclusion:

> .... This is the reason, while looking at the situation obtaining in India at the moment and after pondering over it, one sheds tears of blood and the most crucial question crops up in one's mind, as to what is going to happen to India ultimately? What is going to become of this country?

Answering this question, Bhagat Singh once again brought into focus the role of the political leadership in the centre-stage, pinning down those leaders as the sole motivators and culprits behind communal riots and communalisation of politics. He also raised the economic factor promoting communal politics, and he was perhaps the first of his time to do so.

While emphasising the need for raising economic issues related to the life of millions of workers and peasants to build a real people's movement as a countervailing force against communal politicking, he did not overlook the fact that such a movement must conform to the broad national frame of the anti-imperialist movement and the pivotal question will always remain the ouster of British Raj.

> In the present situation of alien rule any economic reform would be very difficult, as the British Raj does not permit any amelioration in the people's economic lot. Hence the people must plunge body and soul against the present government and till the replacement of the same none should rest content.

Insisting on combating communalism he stated:

> .... In order to stop the people from mutual fighting, class consciousness is needed. The toiling poor, working classes and the peasantry should be made fully aware of the fact that *their real enemies are capitalists; therefore they should desist from doing anything at their behest and remain ever-vigilant from falling prey to their vile machinations, being always on guard against becoming the tool of the capitalists.* (emphasis added)

In his exhortation for all-in unity of the toiling people, he said:

> .... Let people be roused to the consciousness that basic rights of all the poor, the world over, irrespective of race, caste, colour, nationality and country are one, hence their salvation and prosperity lies in their joint struggle. They should therefore work to eradicate and remove all racial, national and religious prejudices, differences and distinctions and unite to seize for themselves, the power of governance.

Placing his optimism in the ultimate triumph, he added:

> .... People must be told that they will be no losers in this struggle and their chains would be broken some day and they will attain freedom and economic emancipation.

Instead of concluding his article on a gloomy note, Bhagat Singh articulated remarkable optimism, reposing his hope and faith in the youth of India and appealed to his countrymen "with folded hands to pay heed to his suggestions". He noted with happiness and satisfaction:

> .... Welcome changes are quite discernible in the minds of the Indian youth now and they are distancing them from such religions which are engaged in fomenting mutual conflict and fostering hatred. The youth have now become so outspoken and forthright, that they do not look at the Indian people from the religious angle—as Hindu, Muslim or Sikh. They are now regarding all Indian people first as human beings and then Indians. Articulation of such a viewpoint by the Indian youth is indicative of the ensuing bright future of India.

Calling upon the Indian people to remain steadfast and dauntless in the face of the communal menace, he wrote:

> The Indian people should not lose heart in face of communal riots; instead they should harness all their resources and potentials and exert by all possible means to create a new ethos and climate where recurrence of communal riots becomes impossible.

While paying rich tributes to the Ghadar party and its heroes in his article, Bhagat Singh underlined the ideological significance of this heroic movement that lay in the Ghadarites' clear-cut attitude towards religion vis-a-vis politics; and their strikingly imaginative position on the most vexed yet vital issue:

> .... The martyrs of 1914-1915 had seperated religion from politics and were convinced that religion was the private affair of an individual; hence none should be permitted to interfere with it. And likewise religion should also be debarred from encroaching in politics because once it is mixed up, it can't work in unison in the same arena.
>
> .... It was because of this that a movement like the Ghadar Party remained integrated and united, in which Sikhs topped the list of those attaining martyrdom, but Hindus and Muslims also did not lag far behind.

Bhagat Singh's most serious concern over communalisation of politics led him to look to different quarters in quest of people and parties that could be united to fight the menace and welcome political leaders with non-communal secular outlook:

> ...At the moment some of our Indian leaders have emerged on the scene who are advocating separation of religion from politics, which is the real remedy to eradicate the communal malady. We support this position. If religion is separated from politics we can come together in political matters while remaining aloof from the religious point of view.

The article ends with this impassioned appeal to his compatriots:

> ....Well-wishers of India would think over the remedy I am suggesting and should come forward to save India from the disastrously suicidal course it is being pushed in.
>
> (These excerpts are from Bhagat Singh's article *Sampardayik Dange aur Unka Ilaj*, that first came in print in *Kirti*, in its issue of June 1927. The Hindi journal *Uttrardh*, published from Mathura (UP), carried this article in its Bhagat Singh Special Number in 1988. All the excerpts in the present article are from this Hindi version, and the free English rendering—of pages 23-24—is mine—N.H.A.)

◆

HE fought against communalism with the clear perception that it was primarily aimed against the poor who were struggling for their emancipation, social, political, economic and spiritual. For Bhagat Singh secularism, Hindu-Muslim unity and communal harmony were not just clichés for coaxing and cajoling the exploited and the ignorant. They were life-giving ideals, for the realisation of which ives could be sacrificed without hesitation or reservation.

Bhagat Singh urged upon the youth to go to the masses of workers and peasants. In their joint etter that Bhagat Singh and his comrade-in-arms, B.K. Dutt, sent to the delegates of the Punjab Students' Federation conference, and which was ead out in the second session of the conference on October 11, 1929, presided over by Subhash Chandra Bose, they pointed out that what was much more important than bombs and pistols for the youth was to spread the revolutionary message to the nook and corner of the country, to the factories and ields—the message to one and all to join the freedom struggle; and it was the bounden duty of he students to go to the poor living in dirty slums, and rouse them to action. It was a time of trial for he youth, they said, and expressed their faith that n the name of the great martyr, Jatindra Nath Das, our student brethren would be able to prove their mettle in the crucible of the freedom struggle. This letter was later published in the English daily, *Tribune*, in its issue of October 22, 1929. mbibing the spirit of this letter, why cannot our students today reach every hearth and home of the ommon toiling Indians and spread the message of Bhagat Singh against the menance of communalism and religious fundamentalism? Why can't *a month-ong 'mass education campaign against communalism' in honour of Bhagat Singh and his comrades-in-arms* be launched and made a permanent feature of the activities of student and youth every year?

If alive, he would have been eightysix now. He entered politics to serve humanity and his countrymen at an early age. He became a confirmed atheist at the minor age of 19. On his own admission, "My atheism is not of so recent origin. I had stopped believing in God when I was an obscure youngman." This was his mild rebuttal of the insinuation from some quarters that his atheism was the outcome of the 'undue' popularity he gained during the trials—that is, the Delhi Bomb and Lahore Consiparacy Cases.

Will our Doordarshan and Akashvani ever find time to portray this charismatic youth, his life-drama, the drama of a man who, nonetheless, was the heart throb of millions and had nothing *mystical* or magical about him?

It was about time that Doordarshan changed its stance and started projecting personalities who shaped India's great destiny and are relevant to the cause of our social progress. Why cannot a month-long Bhagat Singh epic, his life-story, be put on the small screen, without concealing the stark realism associated with him, so as to inspire the common people to follow his footprints in the struggle for eradication of communalism.

What was Bhagat Singh's own vision of the future? His *Diary-Notes*, which begins on September 12, 1929, and contains 140 pages, with B.K. Dutt's signature dated July 1930, provides the contours of that vision. Sunil Chopra, who found and scanned through it has stated:

> Bhagat Singh had visualised that 15 years after thier martyrdom, the British will be forced to quit, but the government that would step in will indulge in loot and plunder of people, vested interests will resort to self-aggrandisement and gangsterism will get the upper hand. "People will forget us," he noted, "within 15 years," and added: 'Then our memory will be revived and people will put our ideas to close scrutiny and for reconstruction of a new social order working classes and honest people will unite together and this organisation will secure the fruits of labour to whom it belongs."

Perhaps, it would not be a day too soon to revive his memory today. Bhagat Singh's immortal ideals beckon all those who can prove equal to the task and are ready to test their mettle, as Bhagat Singh on his own admission tried to test himself and again on his own admission, was not always successful.

And nothing succeeds like success!

In conclusion, I would quote an Urdu couplet from the renowned poet Majrooh Sultanpuri:

> *Dyar-e-Jaur Me Rasta Hai Ek Hi Warna,*
> *Kise Pasand Hai Ai Dil Ki Sair-e-Dar Kare.*
> To overcome the world of tyranny there is but one pathway,
> O, my heart; otherwise who would enjoy journeying to the gallows? ■

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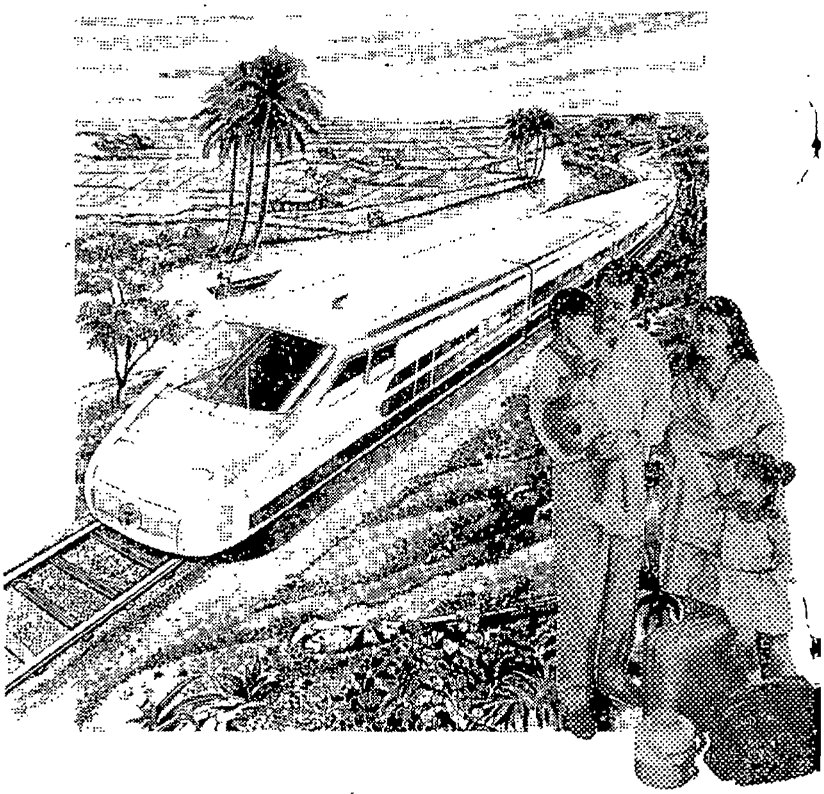

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Surajkund AICC ● Shame of Surat ● PM & Handlooms

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EDITORIAL

For Closer Scrutiny

The inauguration of the committee system for closer parliamentary examination of the functioning of the Union Government's Ministries is an event of signal importance as it would go a long way towards improving the working of our parliamentary democracy. Indeed it would help in its further development and enrichment, as has been aptly noted by the Vice-President while launching the committees in the Central Hall of Parliament.

The idea of the committee system of parliamentary surveillance over the government was mooted quite sometime ago in the early days of the Rajiv Gandhi Government. Even if the system has been introduced rather belatedly, following the Lok Sabha's unanimous decision to that effect on March 29, it needs to be welcomed as it would streamline the procedure of monitoring the operation of the different government departments thereby ensuring greater transparency.

In fact the necessity of the committee system came to be discussed at length at a time when the functioning of Parliament was adversely affected due to the disruption of its proceedings on account of the members' agitation over happenings in the political-social arena outside and the government's response to them. However, even without such disruption, which have by now become a regular feature, it was felt that the two Houses of Parliament within the limited duration of their sittings could not monitor all the Ministries under the Union Government. This is all the more difficult when a large number of MPs express their desire to participate in discussions on the demands for grants of the Ministries as part of the debate on the general budget. Thus every year only a few Ministries come under parliamentary scrutiny, the rest being "guillotined" (bunched together and adopted without any debate) on the conclusion of the general budget discussion for paucity of time. It is a sad commentary on the manner in which we conduct our business that even the government allocations of such a major Ministry as Defence has not come under parliamentary surveillance due to the same reason—unavailability of time for discussion—for the last three to four years.

This lacuna is expected to be removed by the committee system which has now been unveiled. Altogether 17 committees have been set up, each having a maximum of 45 members—30 from the Lok Sabha and 15 from the Rajya Sabha. While such Ministries as Defence, External Affairs, Railways will be covered by separate committees, there will be several committees each looking after two or three Ministers. The Rajya Sabha Secretariat will service six committees (whose chairmen will be from among Rajya Sabha members) and the

Lok Sabha Secretariat eleven (to be headed by MPs from the Lok Sabha). The committees after scrutinising the demands for grants of the individual Ministries are to submit their reports to the two Houses of Parliament for consideration.

No doubt this committee system will reinforce our parliamentary democracy. However, there is one snag: despite repeated requests from journalists' bodies no decision on throwing the committee meetings open to the press has yet been taken. In case they are held in camera as is the present decision, there is every possibility of distorted versions of the meetings appearing in the print media in particular. That would not be in the interest of either the government or the Opposition. Experience has shown that such secrecy tends to be counter-productive. Moreover, such restraint would not be beneficial from the viewpoint of transparency which the committee system seeks to promote. Hence it is imperative for the authorities to review and reverse the current stand of holding these meetings in camera.

By deepening public monitoring of the government—which indeed is the essence of governance in any pluralistic society—this new system promises to strengthen the principles guiding our democratic ethos.

March 31 *S.C.*

INDIA-PAKISTAN

Need to Tackle Basic Issues

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

If at Surajkund, Narasimha Rao has effectively warded off all challenge to his leadership within his own party, it is time for him now to identify the prime issue for the business of governance in the list of priorities facing him. In other words, now that he has consolidated his position as the Congress President, he has to enforce his authority as the Prime Minister.

There are many areas where this needs to be done, both at home and abroad. There is, however, one item which definitely claims the Prime Minister's urgent attention for both our internal and external politics: this is our fast deteriorating relations with Pakistan. The urgency of taking the first step towards halting this deterioration of relations with our close neighbour is heightened by the fact that in just over ten days from now the heads of government of all the South Asian countries would be meeting at the SAARC Summit at Dhaka.

A number of issues pertaining to the problems now being faced by the Narasimha Rao Government relates to India-Pakistan relations. From Kashmir to the bomb blasts in Bombay, official and semi-official reactions--apart from the instant response of quarters normally allergic to Pakistan in our country--have ascribed an active role to the Pakistan Government, particularly its ISI agency. Regarding Kashmir, the longstanding Indian complaint has been that secessionist elements have been getting encouragement and support from Pakistan.

In the recent bomb blasts in Bombay on March 12, the Union Home Minister's first statement in Parliament on March 15 asserted that "the explosions had been definitely engineered by a foreign country through local agents" and reiterated that the blasts were the handiwork of "a foreign country and not a foreign terrorist organisation", though he conceded that he could come to no definite conclusion that Pakistan's ISI was behind the blasts. Ten days later on March 25, the External Affairs Minister addressing the Foreign Correspondents' Club hinted at the possibility of the ISI extending protection to the Memon family who are alleged to have been involved in the Bombay bomb blasts. On March 27, it was the Maharashtra Chief Minister speaking at the AICC session who specifically attacked the ISI for masterminding the outrage even to the point of claiming that the culprits had been trained at Lahore, according to a plan. The government can, of course, take the plea that the ISI involvement became clear only after close investigation, and not before.

What is surprising in the entire episode is that as early as March 14 the Bombay police informed the press about the suspected involvement of the Memon family in the blast on March 12. On

March 15, it now transpires, the Bombay police informed the Centre that Yakub Memon and his family had left Bombay for Dubai hours before the blast on March 12. And yet as late as March 20, the Police Chief of Dubai disclosed that uptil "12 noon today" he had received no official request from the Indian authorities to detain the two prime suspects, Iqbal Memon and Yakub Memon, while actually the Memons were suspected to have flown out from Dubai to Karachi on March 17.

More intriguing is the fact that the Pakistan authorities were contacted about the Memon suspects only on March 23, that is, six long days after their disappearance from Dubai. It is a legitimate question to ask the government that when on March 15 the Bombay police had established that the Memons had escaped, why were Pakistan and all the neighbouring countries of South Asia not alerted by New Delhi to be on the lookout for the absconders? If an assailant escapes from the Capital, it is a normal routine affair for the Delhi police to immediately alert the neighbouring states. In this particular case when the Union Home Minister told Parliament on March 15 that he suspected foreign involvement in the Bombay blast, how was it that the matter was not taken up by New Delhi with the neighbouring governments, including Pakistan?

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IN this context one has to take note of the formal position of the Pakistan Government. Apart from the Pakistan Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharief, sending a message to Narasimha Rao condemning the Bombay bomb blasts, he sent a message offering full cooperation in the investigations, even disclosing that he had directed Pakistan's security agencies to take immediate steps to check recent arrivals from Dubai to Karachi in order to apprehend the criminals. While it may be argued that nothing tangible on this score has so far been received from Islamabad, what is inexplicable is the delay of six days on the part of the Indian authorities to put up a request for apprehending the Memon suspects--a delay which hardly betrays any sense of urgency to catch the culprits.

One is also left to wonder if anybody entering the country *sub rosa* under a different name as the Memons did--according to the press despatches from Dubai--could be apprehended easily six days after the entry. Even if one we complain that the Pakistani authorities been lukewarm about the case--as one listening to the orations at Surajkund--our record hardly betrays any sense of urgency catching the Memons.

Looking at this incident, in the wider conte of Indo-Pak relations, one would have expecte the despatch of a high-powered team from New Delhi to Islamabad to discuss ways and means of curbing such terrorist outrages in both the countries. If Bombay could be the target of terrorist bombing, what prevents Karachi or Colombo or Chittagong escaping such an outrage? Would it not be the wisest course for our government to take the bold initiative in such a matter of common concern? A direct approach to the Pakistan Prime Minister, particularly after his offer to cooperate fully in the investigation to apprehend the culprits, should be the correct Indian step.

The Prime Minister of India has had half a dozen encounters with the Pakistan Prime Minister in the course of his trips abroad. While these meetings might have been correct as per protocol, they produced little substantive by way of improvement in India-Pakistan relations. What is urgently needed today is a more determined effort at boldly tackling the issues of common concern. Understandably, the Kashmir issue would require protracted discussion: perhaps the climate for it needs to be created by bringing normalcy in the Kashmir Valley through some fresh initiative on the part of the Centre, and only after that the Indo-Pak aspect of the problem could be effectively tackled.

More practical would be to settle the Siachen dispute, which has already been discussed threadbare and is only awaiting decision at the summit level. As for other issues, common measures to curb Bombay style terrorism should be on the agenda for Indo-Pak understanding as also for the SAARC Summit. Any progress in this direction would go a long way towards preparing the ground for other more intractable issues to be taken up.

With his wide experience in handling India's relations with its neighbours right from the days of Jawaharlal Nehru, our present Foreign Minister also can and should certainly contribute significantly towards improving India-Pakistan relations which has become so insistently imperative for both countries today. ■

(March 29)

jkund AICC Meet: A Review

SUMIT CHAKRAVARTTY and K. ELANGOVAN

concluded two-day session of the a Congress Committee at Surajkund, March 27-28, 1993) has failed to nd galvanise the Congress cadres to e their sense of demoralisation in the the massive communal challenge to our alist identity as well as secular democracy, launch a spirited counter-offensive in defence our cherished national goals and values. This was our overriding impression after covering this AICC meet for two days and meeting a wide cross-section of the participants.

If one has to analyse the reasons behind such a development one must necessarily refer to the "most important" event at Surajkund: the decimation of the dissidents who, in the perception of the central leadership of the party and its followers, were out to disrupt the unity of the organisation and thereby weaken the Congress.

There is not a shadow of doubt that the course adopted by the dissidents was a tactical blunder : this was not the time to rake up the 'one-man-one-post' issue when the country was beset with much more basic problems, and the Congress as the country's premier national organisation was duty bound to preserve, promote and reinforce its unity at this crucial jucture of history characterised by the offensive of the forces of divisive sectarianism. And who were the personalities raising the demand? M.L. Fotedar, Shiv Shankar, Shiela Dixit, Natwar Singh who had all enjoyed prominence, power and privilege under the previous dispensations and had never even thought of restoring inner-party democracy through application of the 'one-man-one-post' principle. (One does not wish to mention K.N. Singh here because he is in fact a non-entity.) When Shiv Shankar was asked to explain their conduct under Rajiv Gandhi in this regard, he mumbled : "Well, the question had not come up then." Obviously not. Because none would have dared to do so in the prevailing atmosphere of allround sycophancy (in which today's dissident leaders used to wallow without any sense of remorse or shame.) Fotedar, characteristically, was more outspoken (and honest) in flaunting his loyalty. Questioned as to why the thought of introducing 'one-man-one-post' for both Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi had not crossed his mind at any point of time, he did not conceal his anger and annoyance, and shouted back : "They were different. Don't compare him (P.V. Narasimha Rao) with them." One set of rules for the 'Gandhi' (not to mix up with the Father of the Nation) family and a different set of rules for the humble man from Andhra Pradesh who rose to occupy the seat of the Prime Minister but who never forgot his orgins in the village! Naturally, therefore, it was crystal-clear that their fight for principles was just an eye-wash : principles had been invoked only because they were denied the loaves and fishes of office associated with power or proximity to power. It was a blatant case of factional politics.

Not that the idea of 'one-man-one-post' *per se* was fallacious. Not in the least. It remains a pillar of democratic functioning. But given the character of the ruling party, its manifold weaknesses (intertwined with intense rivalry and factionalism at all levels as well as the role that money and muscle power have come to play in Congress politics over the years) and the extraordinary situation through which the nation is passing with the menace and venom of communal hatred having spread far and wide causing havoc in the form of large-scale communal carnage and fratricide, today it was not an issue to which primacy could be attached. Hence it was a tactical error to harp on that issue in the present period. Instead the dissidents should have—and they had every right to do so within the parameters of discipline in a democratic organisation like the Congress—focussed on the glaring pitfalls, shortcomings and mistakes of the party leadership, including the Prime Minister-cum-Congress President, that had resulted in the present crisis giving a handle to the communal elements to embark on their onslaught with the purpose of seizing power. Undoubtedly adoption of such a course with this perspective on their part would have helped to make a signal contribution to the discussion for enhancing the Congress' efficacy to meet the communal danger, and strengthened the party in the long run.

Perhaps Surajkund could then have become as memorable a turning-point as the Faridabad AICC session in 1969, the harbinger of the Congress split later that year.

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BUT that was not to be. The Surajkund session turned out to be a different affair. The Congress leadership found in the defiant dissidents—the 13 signatories to the letter demanding strict compliance of the principle of 'one-man-one-post' who went on dharna at the entrance to the main pandal where the session took place (although one of them, A.B.A. Ghani Khan Chowdhury, was 'hijacked' by the West Bengal PCC chief, Somen Mitra, much to the discomfiture of those who were on dharna)—a threat to the party organisation, its unity and cohesiveness. This too was a false assessment of the situation—something not expected from a seasoned, mature, experienced and astute political leader of the calibre of Narasimha Rao. He more than anyone else should have been in a position to know that the dissidents had hardly any base in the party, and even their mentor, the Human Resource Development Minister, Arjun Singh, had a limited public appeal notwithstanding his latest radical hardline stance against the BJP. Hence there was no need for the kind of over-reaction on the part of the party leadership to the "threat" from their side that was witnessed at Surajkund.

But what needs to be realised is that such over-reaction deflected the session from its main purpose : giving a politico-organisational direction to the party to stem the communal offensive. Instead what one witnessed was a frenzied show of "unity" and "allegiance to the Prime Minister's leadership" simultaneous with condemnation and denunciation of the dissidents (and in some cases the AICC members did not hesitate to make Arjun Singh their butt of attack going to the extent of even demanding his dismissal from the Cabinet). Unity of the party was essential and attempts to disrupt the unity had to be dealt with firmly. But the demonstrative show of unity at Surajkund had all the trappings of the bygone Indira-Rajiv days. The manner in which the decision on the party President nominating two CWC members (who were to be elected) was taken, happened to be a clear case in point. Arjun Singh's sarcastic remark—that the Congress President should himself ponder whether this was in conformity with his desire expressed at Tirupati (where Narasimha Rao had wanted the posts to be filled by election)—was most appropriate. (And none other than Vayalar Ravi, the Kerala PCC chief, moved the motion of reversal of the Tirupati decision. Yes, the same Vayalar whose memorable war against the Syndicate as a Youth Congress leader in 1969 remains etched in one's memory even today.) Had not Narasimha Rao given unmistakable indications of providing something different when he took over (and even at Tirupti less than a year ago at the time of the organisational elections)?

To be fair to Narasimha Rao, he had the foresight to anticipate such an eventuality. In his inaugural address he did highlight the need of the hour : effectively meeting the daunting problems facing the Congress and the country at large. "The overriding political priority is to restore the national consensus on secularism," he declared, adding:

> We have to devise the instruments of secular activism for which reason we have to come down to brasstacks. But we cannot forge such instruments by self-advertising propaganda which is expected to take place here. We must find the idiom of secularism which people are able to understand. It is a question of knowing that we have lived secularism for years.

His ideas were as usual remarkable and striking. But all those became secondary as the "dissident challenge" came to acquire primacy over the necessity to foil the *Sangh Parivar*'s devious and nefarious designs and everything else was swept in the torrent of the same "self-advertising propaganda" against which Narasimha Rao had himself warned.

◆

THE Congress President's inaugural address was significant on several counts. He underscored the imperative need for a massive educational programme by the Congress and all other secular parties through projects of mass contact (meetings, cultural shows, padayatras) at all levels to convey the fact that "secularism is not a borrowed concept but something which has sprung from the soil of India". Only by educating the people and legal and constitutional methods (of clearly demarcating the position of non-secular parties in a secular democracy) can attempts to hijack secularism be prevented. On the economy he sought to allay misapprehensions by bringing out in sharp relief the Congress' commitment towards ameliorating the conditions of the poor, and asserting : "The Congress philosophy begins and ends with the poor." He defended state intervention in different areas but pointed out that that was not possible without growth for which purpose the economic reforms were essential. Harping on the importance of export promotion to tide over the BoP crisis, he underlined—in a bid to silence adverse campaign—that except for three per cent (in the sphere of consumer goods) all foreign investments were in the realm of infrastructure (power, oil, telecommunications). He also referred to the substantive increase in agricultural credits to drive home the point that the farming community occupied a vital position in the Congress' economic programme.

However, it was his remarks on the inner-party situation that marginalised all his other statements. Affirming the imperatives of enforcing discipline, in his own style he said:

> Several party functionaries have accused me of being soft. I would have to respond to what the party workers tell me in this regard. At the same time it must be understood that unity and discipline are two sides of the same coin. They are mutually strengthening.
>
> Our friends and colleagues who have different opinions are welcome to express those. I welcome them to do so in this great forum... I want that *parampara* to continue but not at the cost of discipline. Do not cross the *Lakshman rekha* beyond which dissent becomes counter-productive.

Of course these pronouncements were met with warm applause although some dissidents at the back did not hesitate to shout slogans which were quite critical of the leadership.

Narasimha Rao spoke of the stability that his government and the Congress had come to enjoy of late despite numerous obstacless. "However, if the picture of disunity of the Congres is conveyed it would lead to other complications." That indeed became the major preoccupation of the party at Surajkund. Because the spectre of Faridabad 1969 was haunting the leadership and it was reflected in the political resolution as well. (At the instance of West Bengal's P.R. Das Munshi some portions fo the draft political resolution relating to disunity in the party in that context had to be modified in the final version.)

One person who emerged taller and more powerful after Surajkund was Sharad Pawar, the Maharashtra strongman and Chief Minister, who lent his full weight behind Narasimha Rao.

> When we met at Tirupati we had reached the conclusion that the situation through which we were passing demanded that we should have P.V. Narasimha Rao as our leader. And he was elected unopposed. His tenure as Congress President is not yet over. How can we think of replacing him at this stage? I cannot understand why this demand should be raised now?

This statement of Pawar was the most convincing argument to which the dissidents had no reply.

But more was to come. Madhya Pradesh's Digvijay Singh in a brilliant intervention pointed out that whereas the 'one-man-one-post' demand was a non-issue at this point of time, the basic issues could not be ignored.

> The Congress today is not able to wage struggle with the same firmness as before... We must accept the fact that the confidence we received from the weaker sections and minorities, there is something lacking in that today—that confidence has been eroded. At the same time our credibility is at stake. We must address ourselves to these issues... Whatever programme or decisions you take please don't forget the common office-bearers at the district level but for whom you would not have been here. We, our Ministers have to leave our posh bungalows in Delhi and spread out to the villages and districts—only then can we strengthen the party and effectively fight and defeat the BJP.

He also wanted that the party Constitution should be changed to ensure that the CPB leader would automatically head the AICC.

Interestingly, the spirit of self-criticism manifest in Digvijay Singh's speech was absent in most of the speeches. While Arjun Singh was taken to task and sharply attacked by several speakers, including Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh, P.V. Narasimha Rao was not assailed directly by any speaker for his inability to stand up to the depredations of the *Sangh Parivar* especially on December 6, 1992 at Ayodhya. This does not bode well for inner-party democracy.

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NEVERTHELESS, the economic policy resolution evoked a substantial degree of criticism from several speakers, notably Sanat Mehta of Gujarat who emphasised that the last paragraph of the resolution failed to inspire confidence in the party's policies. The resolution did mention the party's adherence to "growth with social justice" but that was not stressed. The last paragraph read:

> The AICC makes it clear that the liberalisation of the economy and the structural adjustments envisaged are mainly intended to benefit the common people of India, the farmers, the villagers and the middle class. It would ultimately raise the standard of lives of hundreds of

(Continued on page 35)

In the Midst of Darkness...

P.N. HAKSAR

The following constitutes a part of the editorial notes written by the author, a former Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister and one of the most brilliant intellectuals of contemporary India, for the December 1992 issue of Man & Development, *the journal he edits. These lines are being reproduced, with due acknowledgement and the author's permission, from* Man & Development.

—Editor

I do not know what was the state of his heart and of his mind when William Shakespeare wrote the following sonnet:

Oh! fearful meditation! where, alack,
Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?
O, none, unless this miracle have might,
That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

Our meditations are no less fearful as we contemplate the darkness which enveloped our horizon at noontime on Sunday, December 6, 1992. The darkness turned into auguish and despair when one began asking oneself not so much about the act of demolition of an ancient mosque, but about mind-sets of the so-called human beings who did it. It is this mind-set which has caused the agony and the anguish. It was the same mind-set which murdered Gandhi. And it was the same mind-set which nailed Jesus to the Cross. It is a mind-set which is totalitarian and fundamentalist. It is a mind-set which derides the essence and substance of secularism. It is a mind-set which will assuredly destroy our democracy. The immense tragedy is that it is a mind-set which is being assiduously cultivated in a country which has survived the ravages of time only because pluralistic humanism lies at the very core of its civilisation. In the villages in Bihar the ordinary people still sing a Bhojpuri song. And, what a beautiful message it contains! The song is:

Jab man mein Ram nahin
Mandir banake ka kariho.

When love and compassion are replaced by hatred and cruelty, humanism, like Babri Masjid, gets wrecked.

Tulsidas celebrates the birth of Ram by calling him "Deen Dayal" and "Kripal". In our ancient civilisation, actions instigated by *kama, krodh, mada, lobh* and *moha* are *nished*. And yet, the route chosen by the BJP and its so-called *Parivar* is saturated by the *lobh* and *moha* of power and is sustained by hatred. What is even worse is that while it has concocted a perverse history of our past, it has no viable vision of the future of the country—its polity, its economy, its culture and its social cohesion. However, what took place on December 6, 1992 and subsequently in Ahmedabad, Surat, Bombay and elsewhere too must not be regarded as random events unconnected with the complex process taking place within the womb of our society.

Reverting back to the ideology of *Hindutva*, it is truly tragic that a persecution syndrome is being assiduously built up in the minds of those who are classified as Hindus. That is what happened in Nazi Germany when the overwhelming majority of the Germans began believing that the handful of Jews were bent on destroying the Aryan German race. Also, anyone who failed to respond to "Heil Hitler" was immediately classified as an enemy. Its counterpart in India today is, tragically, *"Jai Sri Ram"*. Unless the protagonists of reason, rationality, democracy, liberalism and secularism effectively fight the persecution syndromes of the majority and the fear gripping the minority, our country would be plunged into a state of total chaos reminiscent of the 30 years of religious wars of Europe. It was the agony of these religious wars which generated the process of secularisation of the human mind in Europe. Must we act like the Bourbons of whom it was said that "they learnt nothing and forgot nothing"? By undertaking the *rath yatras* from Somnath, Kashi and Mathura the ideologues of *Hindutva* are acting like the Bourbons. It does not require any great act of imagination to see that the BJP's route to power is littered with dead and dying bodies of human beings. There is still time to step back and to reflect. And this intense act of reflection as well as examination of our individual conscience is required from all those who are actors in the political arena of our country.

◆

MILLIONS of words have been written and uttered since December 6, 1992. None matches the sensitiveness and sensibility of the words of two young girls living somewhere in Calcutta. The Editor of *The Statesman* had the sensibility to publish these words on the front page of its December 13, 1992 issue. The Editor stated that it was for the first time in the history of that journal that a letter addressed to the Editor was published on its front page. To the authors of this letter—Varsha Venkatesh and Poonam Narang—we bow our head in total reverence as representing an undying faith in the future of our country and of our civilisation. Respectfully we pay our homage to these two incandescent spirits. Reproduced below is what they saw in their agony which we share:

> Dear Mr Advani:
>
> We have watched in silence as the country was rocked by communal violence to extents we've never known of before. We've sat home through our very first curfew, lamenting on the sad circumstances; hoping against hope that things would, somehow, "get better". But I guess even idealistic students must, someday, face up to reality. Thank you, Mr Advani, you have opened our eyes.
>
> Your passionate *Hindutva* has just about wiped out the last vestiges of Hinduism from this nation. Ironical, that your BJP-VHP-RSS combine—the so-called crusaders of Hinduism—seem responsible for hammering the last nail in the coffin of Hinduism. Thanks to all of you, today, no Hindu can stand with his head held high, for you have violated the very essence of Hinduism.
>
> What did you feel Mr Advani, when you saw the saffron clad fanatics atop the Babri Masjid domes? Glee? Triumph? But do you know what India felt? Humiliation, Mr Advani—gross, crass, humiliation.
>
> True, she had made to the BBC headlines on the 7th, but it wasn't with her head held high. Her pride had been ground to dust by the puerile acts of a handful of individuals who were as far away from the truth of Hinduism as the illiterate from the knowledge of the cosmos.
>
> What, in the name of heaven, did you hope to achieve by bringing down a 400-year old historical monument? Was it your weird sense of humour that made you want to reduce what was once a symbol of tolerance and peaceful coexistence to a monster, spitting the fire of communal hatred? Did not the Hindus and Muslims worship side by side in the shrine in the masjid? Was it necessary to draw them asunder? So what if it was the birthplace of Rama? So what if there had existed a temple thousands of years ago? There still was an idol of Rama which was duly worshipped. Did you honestly believe that something as insignficant as a Muslim exterior would diminish the sanctity of Lord Rama? If the people of Ayodhya were willing to let bygones be bygones, why couldn't you? Mr Advani, your *Hindutva* stinks suspiciously of dirty politics.
>
> Will you take moral responsibility for the hundreds dying in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and even the United Kingdom? Will your brand of *Hindutva* feed the daily wage-earner languishing in his slum? Mr Advani, your acts amount to nothing short of culpable homicide. Whom did you demolish the mosque for? Not for the Indian on the street; for the Hindu in him and the Muslim in him coexisted in harmony and amity. What values have you held forth to these 800 million Indians, Mr Advani? Definitely not the values of tolerance and forbearance preached by Hinduism.
>
> Your myopic and prejudiced view disgust us. The student community will indeed find it very difficult to forgive you. We pride ourselves on being citizens of a democratic, secular, socialist nation. Yes, sir, secular! Should we define it for you? The dictionary defines it as, "having nothing to do with religion", but our Constitution has taken it to mean a tolerance of the religious diversities in India. Secularism is part and parcel of our very existence. In flouting the Constitution, you have destroyed the identity of every proud Indian.
>
> Did we hear you justify the demolition of the Babri Masjid on the ground that fifty temples were destroyed in Kashmir! With due respect, sir, did you ever wonder as to why Hamurabi's code of law has not survived in this world? Does ahimsa find a place in your dictionary? Politician that you are, could you find no difference in the political circumstances in Kashmir and Ayodhya?
>
> Let us brush aside these apparent shortcomings in your profile and assume for the time being that you (God forbid!) become the Prime Minister of India. Will you then, live up to your party ideology? Will you, as Prime Minister, disallow the reconstruction of the demolished masjid? We keep hearing you talk about the wrong policies of the government on this issue and their having been on a suicidal path. What would you have done, Mr Advani? Would you have been a Hindu Prime Minister, ignoring the largest minority in the country? Would you declare India a Hindu state? What then would you do about the millions of Indian Muslims? Will you snatch away their very identity? They have been Indians, only Indians, for longer than they can remember. What happens to them?
>
> At a time when the country is stumbling into the 21st century, you have thrown us back another 50 years. At

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a time when the country is facing problems on the economic and national front, when the need of the hour is a concentrated effort on the part of every single Indian, you have had the audacity to introduce as base an element as communal politics into the scene. And you call yourself an Indian?

Worse, a Hindu?

You have had the temerity to ruin our tomorrow for the sake of your today. We are India's future and we did NOT want the Babri Masjid to be demolished. What gave you the right to destroy our dreams of tomorrow? What gave you the right to shatter the idealistic illusions of the millions who sit poised to shape India's destiny? What gave you the right, Mr Advani? Do you have an answer for us?

Regards,
Varsha Venkatesh
Poonam Narang

Calcutta, December 12, 1992.

I hope that L.K. Advani would have both the humility and courage to respond to the questions raised by the authors of this letter. I devoutly hope that his concept of *Hindutva* does not exclude non-violent *vaad vivaads*.

◆

I began this note with Fearful Meditations. But Varsha Venkatesh and Poonam Narang have helped to inspire in our mind the vision of our country which we have always carried and which was inspired by Rabindranath Tagore. As an act of the affirmation, we must coclude these notes by recalling his passionate words:

Where the mind is without fear
and the head is held high,
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken
up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason
has not lost its way into the
dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward
by thee into ever-widening thought and action—
into that heaven of freedom,
My Father,
let my country awake.

We also share Allama Iqbal's affirmation of faith in the destiny and survival of our country when he wrote:

Yunan, Misr, Ruma sab mit gaye jahan se.
Ab tak magar hei baki namo nishan hamara,
Kutch baat hei, ke hasti mit ti nahin hamari,
Sadiyon raha hai dushman,
Daure zaman hamara. □

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Surat Shames the Nation

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER

This article by the Director, Institute of Islamic Studies, Bombay was written quite sometime back soon after the Surat riots. It is now being published due to its persisting relevance. —Editor

Surat is one of the fast-industrialising cities in the country. Its rapid expansion has very few parallels in India. Its population also increased phenomenally. All these factors have to be kept in mind in order to understand what happened in Surat. Until recently Surat was considered a bastion of communal peace and harmony. In fact there were several theories as to why Surat was peaceful whereas Ahmedabad and Baroda, two other important industrial towns of South Gujarat, erupted so often that communal violence has become endemic to them.

Among these theories as to why Surat was so peaceful, some maintained that there are a large number of Muslim traders, an exceptional phenomenon among Muslims. In fact Gujarat has three trading Muslim communities—Khojas, Bohras and Memons—all of whom have strong roots in Gujarati culture. Members of these communities live in large numbers in Surat and have close interaction with the Hindu traders. Thus they are very well rooted and integrated in the city culture. All of them have close business relationship with the Hindu traders and these factors, it was thought, were responsible for the exemplary communal harmony and peace in the city. Also the city, in view of rapid expansion in commerce and industry had one of the lowest levels of unemployment. As the local population was not enough to fulfil the demand, a large number of workers had to be brought in from outside, especially from Andhra, Kathiawar (another part of Gujarat) and Orissa. The population of the city increased rapidly on account of migration from other parts of the country.

The low level of unemployment was also considered as one of the causes of communal peace. When people are busy in their respective vocations, neither have they the time nor the inclination to indulge in violence. They are more busy earning their livelihood. The third factor which was thought to be helpful in maintaining cordial relations between various communities was the history of the city. The city had no history of communal violence and hence no bitter memories of the past. In fact most of its people were proud of this heritage.

But the events of December 7 very well showed communal peace and harmony were being eroded slowly and gradually by the very factors which brought rapid growth and development. It is a worldwide experience that economic growth and development brings in its wake certain adverse consequences too. Economic development often gives rise to violence (class, caste or communal) as it brings about changes in the social set-up (old privileged groups resist this change on account of loss of their privileges often violently). It is also well known that urbanisation results in rising graph of crimes. Also, in backward countries like India, development often results in increasing the demand for illicit liquor (specially in those areas which are under prohibition), smuggled goods and other related activities.

Rapid urbanisation has other consequences as well. It brings about migration of workers on a large scale, at times seriously upsetting the old population balance. What is worse, the migrated workers are not rooted in the local culture and feel alienated. They come there to make money and consider the city as nothing more than a vast transit camp. They have neither any stakes in the city nor any emotional attachment to it. Such people, with their feeling of alienation, are generally violence-prone and can easily explode in a sensitive and tense situation.

Of late Surat has had all these ingredients thus pushing it to the precipice of violence. It was only a matter of time and conjuctions of certain factors. The sustained compaign of hatred for the last several years, indulged in by the BJP-VHP-RSS, supplied the necessary fuel to the raging fire under the surface. On the other hand, leaders of the Babri Masjid Action Committee and other reckless Muslim leaders too played with the emotions of Muslims. There was thus a simmering discontent within the Muslim community as well.

As pointed out above, with rapid expansion of Surat criminalisation touched now heights. It became virtually a den of criminals. Many hardened criminals took refuge in this city. Others, who were interested only in making a quick buck, also flocked to it. This city became notorious for minimum government. Tax laws were openly flouted. A city where all laws are openly and unabashedly flouted cannot remain an abode of peace for long. Moreover, the Chief Minister of Gujarat, Chimanbhai Patel, admitted highly dubious characters in the Janata Dal in order to establish his foothold in South Gujarat. It is also unforunate that the City Congress leadership in Surat was appropriated by some Muslims with unsavoury reputation. The BJP was seen, in these circumstances, as a party which was different from the Congress, Janata Dal, etc. Thus it became more acceptable for the people and also its Hindu bias made it more popular in the communally surcharged atmosphere in the country. The riots in Surat city must be seen in this socio-economic as well as political background.

A city which grew in population from 4.71 lakhs in 1971 to 15.71 lakhs in 1991—a breathtaking growth by any account—could not have avoided violence, be it in communal or any other form, for long. It was only a matter of time after all.

The major industries in the city are art silk, powerloom, textile and diamond cutting. Some large-scale industries have also sprung up in the city which are mainly capital intensive. Most of the workers work on piece rate basis and try to put in maximum number of hours to earn more. The diamond cutting industry is a very flourishing industry and it employs largely Kathiawadi, that is, Saurashtrian workers. However, in art silk and powerloom industries one finds workers from Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, UP, Bihar and Tamil Nadu. They are very large in number and live, by and large, in hutment colonies which have sprung up in a number of places.

◆

AS pointed out before, development brings about change in the socio-econmic status of various caste and community groups. Over the years, the traditional upper castes—Vanias and Brahmins—have declined in influence and middle castes—like Kanbis, Khatris, Ghanchi and Gola Ranas—have emergeed as dominant groups. The emergent groups are usually more dynamic but less value-oriented; they are more hard working but do not enjoy a high degree of inner peace and harmony. They are less religious but more communal. This appears to be inevitable in the process of modernisation. In tradition-bound societies people tend to be more religious than communal. While traditional societies have had sectarian or religious conflicts, modern societies have communal conflicts. Also, the emergent groups, like the middle castes (both among Hindus as well as Muslims), tend to be more communal. It was the emergent middle class among the Muslims in the pre-partition period which brought about the division of the country by adopting irreconcilably communal attitudes. It is the emergent middle classes and castes among the Hindus who are becoming increasingly communal to assert their aggressive domination. The BJP has apparently given them a proper ideology and articulation. This class feels today that the Hindus were taken for granted and that their privileges are being threatened due to the emergence of militancy among the backward castes and Dalits on the one hand, and militant assertion of their rights by Muslims and Sikhs on the other.

I would also like to refer to the differences in attitude of the upper caste Hindus towards the Muslims and that towards the Dalits and backwards. They consider the Muslims as invaders and those who enslaved the Hindus for a thousand years, oppressed them and demolished their temples. Not only could they never become a part of the Indian mainstream, they also maintained their separate identity and separatist attitudes and ultimately divided India. So they have nothing but contempt and hostility for them. This hostility acquires much greater intensity when the perception of 'appeasement of Muslims' by the Congress is imparted to them by the BJP for the latter's political designs. The intense hostility towards the Muslims among the upper caste Hindus must be seen in this background.

As for the Dalits and backwards, they were exploited and dominated by the upper castes themselves. They simply want them to remain in their place and not aspire for equal social and political status. However, they can agree to throw some crumbs to them in the form of reservation, nothing more. They would not be intensely hostile towards them as they are towards Muslims. Similarly the Sikhs are considered a part of the Hindu society and ethos. There is close cultural interaction with them. They are also seen as protectors of the Hindus from the Mughals in the past. Furthermore, they stood with the Hindus at the time of partition and refused to play into the hands of Jinnah. Their militant assertion today is seen only as a temporary aberration and not a permanent alienation. Thus despite what is happening in Punjab the Hindus do not develop that kind of hostility towards the Sikhs as they have developed towards the Muslims. This, to some extent, explains why the upper caste Hindus have developed such hatred towards the Muslims and do not feel guilty even after committing the kind of atrocities which were committed against them in Surat. "They deserve it," they maintain. "This is what they did with us Hindus in the medieval period," some Hindus said in Surat. (This should not be taken to mean that all Hindus are of this view. We are referring to the communal Hindus and those influenced by them).

II

AFTER this long introduction we want to refer now to the actual events in Surat from December 6, 1992 onwards. It must be pointed out here that Surat has had no history of communal violence. The last riot which took place was in 1927. Surat remained free of communal violence even in 1969 when Gujarat was rocked with unprecedented communal violence. There were some skirmishes only in 1990 and 1992. But riots had never taken place on such a large scale and with such cruelties.

As soon as the news of demolition of the Babri Masjid came, like other towns Surat also became tense. There was anger and resentment among the Muslims. It was sought to be capitalised by one Mahmood Pardewala who heads the Bharatiya Minority Suraksha Sangh (BMSS) and is a man of dubious underworld connections. He gave a call for Surat Bandh. The BMSS is a small organisation with little following among the Muslims and Dalits. However, some men belonging to this organisation tried to stop traffic and force the bandh on unwilling people. They even stoned shops and damaged them. Near the station there was brickbatting from both the communities.

Near Chowk Bazar four shops belonging to the majority community were set ablaze. The Shantinath Dyeing Mills was also damaged in arson by the minority community miscreants. This invited well-organised retaliation from the majority community. At about 11.30 AM the Pandesara Housing Colony was attacked after an announcement was made to that effect from a nearby Kali temple. The announcement allegedly said: 'destroy Muslims'. Before this attack the Hindus wrote *'Jai Shri Ram'* on their houses to save them from being attacked. A mob of nearly 2000 people came equipped with lathis, choppers, etc. They first looted 50 houses belonging to the Muslims and then set them afire. They also killed some 15 Muslims and threw their bodies nearby. They first stabbed them, our invetigators were told, and then burnt them. Some Hindus like one Tiwari and others tried to save the lives of Muslims by giving them shelter in their houses and then showing them the way to escape. Many Muslim lives were thus saved. Some Hindus even tried to prevent the 2000 strong mob from entering the area but failed.

The manner in which the large-scale looting, burning and killings took place shows that they were pre-planned. The crowds which indulged in killings and looting carried weapons like lathis, swords, knives, iron rods, gupties, acid bulbs, bottles and stones. Several incidents of private firing were also reported. Though the petral pumps were closed, petrol was freely available. It was used for setting shops and houses on fire. Some shops belonging to the Hindus were also burnt but their number was far less than that of the Muslim houses and shops. What is also to be noted is that the destruction of minority lives and properties took place not only where they were in a minority but also in those areas where they were either in substantial numbers or even in a majority. Huge crowds from outside came and outnumbered them. In many cases they were assisted by the local Hindu neighbours too. In many localities initially Hindus and Muslims formed Ekta Samitis but when the attacking mobs came the Hindu neighbours succumbed under pressure or in some cases even turned hostile to the Muslims.

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IN several places like Vijayanagar, Pandesara, Hidayatnagar, etc. people complained that the likely BJP candidates for the forthcoming Municipal Corporation elections collected information about Muslim families with a promise to renew their ration cards. However, this information was used for identifying the Muslim families and their houses for burning and looting.

The same method was used by the miscreants in the January riots in Bombay too. According to the report prepared by Kalpna Shah, Smita Shah and Neha Shah,

> ... for each identification of Muslim houses or shops informant was tipped Rs 100. And in one locality where the riot was at its worst and most barbaric and inhuman the Hindus wrote on their houses '*Shri Ram*—this house belongs to Hindu' or they had the tiles inscribed of Hindu gods and godesses, reminding the story of *Alibaba aur Chalis Chor.* Even during the rampage utmost care was taken that not an inch of property belonging to a Hindu was damaged—to the extent that even a wooden partition dividing a Hindu home from a Muslim one would be left unscarred whereas the adjoining Muslim home would be totally charred.

According to Mohammad Yousuf and Sadiqbhai Rangoonwala, a mob of 500 Hindus entered Masjid Mohallah also known as Quatar Gaon at about 7 PM on December 7. First, they set fire to three houses. Then they turned towards a dargah and a mosque, looted them and set them ablaze. Then another 45 houses were targeted, looted and burnt. Some houses and a mosque were razed to the ground. The attacking mob had even brought a road roller from the Municipality alongwith the driver to raze houses to the ground. How a road roller could be brought belonging to the Municipality is a matter of inquiry. In this locality too, persons like Amrutbhai, Dayabhai, Naginbhai and several others tried their best to save Muslim lives by hiding them in their houses.

A mob of around 2000 persons attacked the huts of Muslims in Rajiv Nagar-Phatakwadi around 2.30 PM. First, they looted the huts and then set 116 of them on fire. There is a building called Mehul Chambers nearby. The miscreants threw burning cotton from this building onto the huts. The Makbara Masjid nearby also got damaged. They tried to burn down the mosque but did not succeed. The attacking mob consisted of Oriyes and Kathiawadis.

A mob of 200-300 consisting of Muslims attacked the Shantinath Silk Mill at about 12 PM on December 7. First, they asked its owner, Harshadrai Brijlal Dakotia, to close the mill which was then closed. After this the two communities clashed near the corner adjacent to the mill. During this rioting the minority mob set the mill on fire. They also stabbed the watchmen at the gate before setting the mill on fire. The Hindus then took revenge by burning eight houses belonging to the minority community from the Sagrampura-Golkiwad area. Both the mobs used burning cotton for arson.

The Rape Incidents

The worst incident took place in Vijay Nagar No. 2. About 10-12 feet high walls of bamboos were erected to prevent the Muslims from running away from there. Also floodlights were installled to watch the movements of the people in the area. The attack started on December 7 night and lasted until December 9. A mob of 800—well armed with choppers, iron bars and swords—came in the night of December 7. Sometime before the attack the Muslims in the area tried to shift to a more secure place but their Hindu neighbours persuaded them not to leave and assured them of their safety; but they could not save them. The mob set some 250 houses of Muslims on fire after looting them. They killed around 70 Muslims in the night of December 8. Before mounting the attack the electric wires of the area were cut plunging the area into darkness.

Then they raped 13 to 16 women and it was said each woman was raped by four to 10 persons. After the rape these women were brought out and made to walk through floodlights. It is also alleged that a video film of the rape incident was made. But this could not be confirmed through reliable sources. Probably this may not be true. At least no one has seen the video. Such atrocities were committed here that sent shivers down our spine. Local Imams in Vijaynagar were humiliated and were forced to say *"Jai Shri Ram"*. They were then cut into two or three pieces. In one case a person was thrown alive into the fire. The heads of some children were struck on stone and then they were torn into pieces. The old persons were also beaten and killed. While some people were killed and burnt and some burnt alive, some were thrown down from upper floors of the buildings. In some cases even heads were chopped. And, in order to wipe out the evidence many bodies were either burnt or thrown into nearby drains.

In one case the rioters killed the entire family of six staying in Sadurrehaman Manzil and raped an eight-year old girl of the family. Yasmin, an 18-year old, saw first her mother being fatally attacked and then she herself was stripped and raped by eight to 10 persons. An Imam of the mosque was done to death before the eyes of his wife, Anwari Begum Kutbuddin, who was then raped. After raping her they threw some inflammable liquid on her to burn her to death but she somehow survived and is in a private hospital. In another pathetic case the seven month pregnant Jamila Bano had the agony of witnessing her three children being hacked to death. She has become mentally unhinged and is in the hospital. One Gaddar, a Hindu, saved Yasmin's uncle Yunus. Similarly many Hindu families saved several Muslim families. Otherwise the toll would have been much higher. In this locality too everywhere one could see *'Jai Shri Ram, Hindu ko makan'* written on many houses. On inquiry we were told that this was the only way to save one's house from being looted and burnt. A majority of the looters were Kathiawadis.

Udhna Magdalla Road

A mob of nearly 800 came to burn the Choksi Mills belonging to Mohammad Hanif. The watchman resorted to air firing but could not stop the mob of 800 from entering the mill premises. The owner told us that they had come with cotton wastes and petrol. In this mill 95 per cent workers and other staff are Hindu and yet it was not spared. Before burning the mill, goods were looted. They had brought one tempo also to cart away the looted goods. According to the owner, perhaps this act of looting and burning was to avenge the burning of the Shantinath Silk Mill at the hands of the Muslims. The owner suffered a loss of Rs 1.5 crores. Other mills and factories looted and burnt are as follows: 1) Wellknown Silk Mills, owner Kassambhai, loss Rs 25 lakhs; 2) Wag Bakariwala Silk Mills, owned by Firozbhai, loss Rs 75 lakhs; 3) Dada Silk Mills, owner Aarif Dada, loss Rs 2.5 crores; 4) Huzuri Cold Drink Factory, owner Mohsinbhai Huzuri, loss Rs 25 lakhs. In Dada Silk Mill too 95 per cent of the staff was Hindu. At Udhna Magdalla Road, there is an Industrial Area where out of 400 only one unit belonged to a Muslim and it was burnt. Also there were 800 shops on this road belonging to Muslims and all of them were burnt. All this happened on December 8, 1992.

Gulshan Nagar (Pandesara)

Mushtaq Ahmed from this colony told our investigators that the miscreants first looted the colony on December 8 at 8 PM and then 100 houses were set afirs. The same day at 5 PM the police had told the inmates to leave their houses and had assured them their houses would be protected. But not a single house was saved.

Bahthena

It is a hutment colony and migrant workers were staying there. The government had given them this land only a few months ago and hence the residents were not registered on the electoral list. About 500 people attacked the colony on December 8. Before the attack the police had picked up around 50 persons from here. About 261 huts were reduced to ashes. It was a mixed colony and people of different communities stayed there. Some people left in the colony told the investigators that no political leader had visited it so far. They bitterly complained against the political leaders, police and the goondas. One Amrut Dattu told us poignantly: "*Garib ke kandhe par bondook rakhkar hi gharib ko marte hain*" (they put gun on the shoulders of the poor to kill poor) and that "*sab leaderon ko goli mar deni chahiyye*" (all leaders should be shot dead). On December 9 the violence went on from 11 AM to 5 PM and houses in different places were first looted and then burnt. The following incidents are worth mentioning. In Triveni Society 50 houses were affected; whereas in Mina Nagar 40 houses, in Dawalsa Slum 10 houses and in Vishram Nagar one mosque were damaged. All rioters involved in these incidents were outsiders, that is, they were either from Orissa or Kathiawar. Maganlal Bailal from Vishram Nagar said that there was unity between the Hindus and Muslims but it is outsiders who came and created communal trouble. Near Central Road, Udhna 37 shops belonging to the Muslims were looted and burnt by the mob at about 8 PM. The rioters were from Orissa and parts of North India. Similarly at Pandal Market a few shops belonging to the minority community were attacked, looted and burnt.

Another most tragic incident took place on December 10 near Udhna Station. A train was stopped at about 7.30 AM about three or four kilometres away from Udhna. A mob of 500 equipped with lathis, choppers, iron bar fell on the train. They pulled out 50 Muslims and killed them. Some of them were women. They were raped, killed and burnt. In the case of a woman a rod was inserted in her front and back because of which she bled profusely. Then her clothes were torn and thereafter she was thrown into the fire alongwith her brother. Many other women were forced to undergo the traumatic experience of their husbands and children being killed before their own eyes. Our investigators saw three salwars and kameezes lying still on the spot.

Nanpura Hijrawad

In this area the Muslim mob attacked Hindu houses on December 10 and burnt five houses. A temple in the vicinity was also damaged.

It is very difficult to say how many persons were killed in these riots. A rough estimate shows the number of those killed must have been around 300, most of whom were Muslims (around 95 per cent but the official death toll is below 200). Around 30 women were raped during this frenzied period. In all about 20 industries were looted, burnt and destroyed; of these eight were big and 12 belonged to the small-scale category. Out of the eight industries affected one belonged to a Hindu. More than a thousand houses and shops were also looted and burnt; over 900 of these belonged to the Muslims.

As far as the religious places were concerned, 15 mosques and two temples were partially or wholly damaged.

Needless to say the police role was far from satisfactory. Datta, who is considered honest and efficient, was the Police Commissioner. He had cracked down on the bootleggers and other anti-social elements which was resented by the policemen in general in Surat as it seriously affected their income from regular *haftas* (weekly bribe money). Datta could not control the riots as the policemen, out of resentment, did not obey his orders, and secondly because in Surat too, as in other places, the police has been communalised. Looting, killing and burning went on openly and unchallenged. No victim of violence could rely on the police for his/her safety and security. In fact there was so much resentment among the police against Datta that some people even thought that the riots were engineered to remove Datta from Surat. Though Datta was transferred as a result of these riots, there is not much substance in this theory. The riots were engineered by the BJP and they were well planned by them. The other factors we have already discussed in the introductory part of this report.

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THE BJP campaign has highly communalised the common people as well as the middle class intelligentsia. Not only is violence against the Muslims legitimised but also the rape of Muslim women is justified on the ground that such acts were perpetrated on the Hindus in the medieval ages. Though shocking, the propagation of such arguments is true. It is not that all this was done in a state of emotional excitement. All this is being justified even after the event which shows the extent of communalisation among the people and the degree of hostility generated.

As pointed out earlier, the Bohras, Khojas and Memons are the business communities of Gujarat. They are generally peace-loving and mild and hardly ever take part in political movements. They are also very well integrated with the non-Muslims. Even these communities were not spared in the Surat riots. The mobs went about with the list of their shops and in many cases phoned and told the owners in advance that their shops were going to be looted which shows how much confidence they had. Calling the police was, of course, of no help.

More shocking was the fact that among the looters were not only the anti-socials and the poor and illiterate but also those belonging to educated middle classes and upper classes. Even women were not to be left behind. When the jewellers' shops were forced open they were found frantically searching for proper sizes of gold bangles and sandals in those shops. Many of these women too belonged to middle and upper middle classes. This gives a measure of the degeneration of moral values in the modern consumerist society. Those who raise the slogan *'Jai Shri Ram'* are not hesitant to do the most barbaric acts—raping the women and burning them alive, cutting children into pieces in presence of their mothers, and stabbing and throwing wounded persons into the fire though they are well aware that Ram was *Maryada Purushottam*, that is, the moral standard-bearer of humanity.

The BJP which aspires to come to power encourages all this without realising that in the midst of such degeneration it would find it very difficult to rule in an orderly way. One must remember that one who perpetrates violence would meet a violent end. But who cares for the future? Lust for power blinds a person as much as religious prejudice. And imagine what happens when both combine! ■

(The investigation of the Surat riots was carried out by the Ekta team comprising Nilofer Bhagwat, Premsagar Gupta and Shridhar Kshirsagar.)

UNION BUDGET

Another Neo-Classical Exercise In Neo-Colonial Setting

G.P. MISHRA

The Union Budget for 1993-94 is the third successive budgetary exercise of the Narismha Rao Government which was presented by the Finance Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, in the Lok Sabha on February 27, 1993. The main objective of this budgetary exercise is to operationalise the IMF-World Bank (called Fund-Bank henceforth) guided process of structural reforms for liberalising the Indian economy with a view to integrating it into the world capitalist order which is called the globalisation of the Indian economy.

Policy Measures in the Budget

Given the objective of the Fund-Bank inspired process of structural reforms, the Union Budget has introduced four major policy reform measures: (a) the full convertibility of the rupee on trade account, (b) export credit measure, (c) policy initiatives for foreign investment, and (d) financial reform measure.

The full rupee convertibility measure eliminates the dual exchange rate system and it is now termed as the unified exchange rate system. According to this system, all those who earn foreign exchange—whether exporters or Indian workers abroad, will have 100 per cent conversion into the rupee at the market rates. Similarly, importers can procure foreign exchange at the unified exchange market rate. In other words, the RBI has nothing to do with the regulation of exchange value of rupee.

The export credit measure introduced in the Budget involves the grant of two major concessions with regard to export credit: firstly, one per cent reduction in interest rate and secondly, the waiver of income tax on interest income of banks from export credit. The purpose of these two measures is to promote credit for export purposes.

The policy initiatives taken in the Union Budget for foreign investment are meant for encouraging the flow of foreign investment by entering into bilateral negotiations and joining the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) to reassure foreign investors on the security of their investment in India. The fourth major reform measure (that is, financial reform measure) envisages privatisation of the nationalised banks through the backdoor by asking them to raise equity in the open market.

As the Budget stands and the Finance Minister's Budget speech records, the main objective of these four policy measures is to stimulate growth, export and investment. But the fundamental questions before the nation are: how and in which direction growth, export and investment will be stimlulated and for whom? Even if we take these policy measures at their face value, these measures aim at stimulating growth through export and foreign investment. In other words, the Union Budget through the introduction of these measures seeks to adopt the path of foreign investment-led export-oriented growth of the Indian economy.

The adoption of foreign investment-led path of export-oriented growth has far-reaching consequences for the Indian economy, society and polity because inbuilt in this path of growth is the direction of compelling India to follow the dependent capitalist process of development. Therefore, the policy reform measures for the full rupee convertibility, export credit and encouraging flow of foreign investment are not meant for liberalising and opening up the Indian economy in order to encourage export and foreign investment in the national interest. This is all the more transparent in the conditions in which India is enjoying her place in the unequal world, given her economic power in terms of capital and techno-scientific capability and competency.

Fiscal Exercises

The fiscal exercises of the Union Budget are not simply a calculus of revenue and expenditure but an act of tailoring the tax and expenditure proposals of the Budget in view of the essentials

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of economic policy of the state and the government. Given the essentials of the government's new economic policy, popularly known as structural policy reforms, the tax and expenditure proposals are tailored in order to facilitate the process of liberalisation of the Indian economy.

In view of this objective, the tax and expenditure proposals and their respective calculus of the Budget have followed the principle of moderate tax policy and of strict control on expenditure. This twin principle aims at realising the following: (a) reduction in fiscal deficit to five per cent of the GDP in the next financial year for containing price inflation; (b) moderating the tax rate structure in order to legitmise the decontrol regime by providing incentives to those who run and control the manufacturing sector; (c) strict control on capital expenditure, specially in the public sector, in order to squeeze the socio-economic space of the public sector for its gradual absorption into the private sector or market economy of the country; and (d) opening up the capital market by privatising the banking institutions. Briefly speaking, the classical theory of public finance, which follows the doctrine of *laissez-faire*, has governed the fiscal exercises of the Union Budget. The tax-free character of the Budget and the public sector disinvestment plan to mobilise revenue of Rs 3500 crores by selling its equity in the open market very much support the old dictum of public finance, that is, 'minimum tax' with decontrol. It is also understandable in view of the policy design of the government worked out under the Fund-Bank dictates.

The fiscal arithmatic of the budgetary proposals corresponding to the moderation principle of the tax rate structure shows the following:

(a) The manufacturing sector will have a tax relief of Rs 4522 crores from the hefty cuts in customs and excise duties on a wide range of goods.

(b) The proposal not to change the corporate taxes also provide some kind of relief but indirectly whose estimate is not given in the Budget. But the revenue loss from the rise in standard deduction from Rs 12,000 to Rs 15,000, tax holiday for investors in select sectors and for investment in economically backward States and Union Territories is estimated to be Rs 300 cores. A major part of the revenue loss from the direct will definitely go to the manufacturing sector, particularly to the corporate sector. A substantially lower tariff regime, unchanged corporate taxes and tax holiday for select sectors and for investment in economically backward States are a package of tax reliefs to benefit the trade and industrial sectors with a view to transforming the decontrol policy regime in the direction of the liberalisation process. The interest rates cut by one per cent from 18 per cent to 17 per cent is the other way to consolidate the liberalisation process at the monetary front.

The expenditure side of the Union Budget indicates the following:

(a) The concept of development expenditure implies investment for development in the social infrastructure sectors like education and health which the market cannot take care of. In that case, the state has to play its role in such a social development, otherwise the party in power that governs the state will lose that power in the given democratic set-up of the Indian polity.

(b) The freezing of capital expenditure at the same level of Rs 29,000 crores or so since 1991-92 implies the absence of productive investment by the state in the economy.

(c) The strict control on expenditure also implies increase in Plan expenditure by reducing non-Plan expenditure. The proportion of Plan expenditure is expected to increase from 28 per cent in 1991-92 to about 31 per cent in 1993-94. This marginal increase of three per cent in the Plan expenditure is primarily on account of the decline in non-Plan expenditure on the capital account from Rs 13,292 crores in 1992-93 to the estimated figure of Rs 12,418 crores in the current Budget. In this way, the total Plan expenditure is estimated to be Rs 41,251 crores in the next financial year, of which an amount of Rs 17,066 crores is shown to be on the capital account. This means a major part of the capital expenditure coming from external borrowing will go for unproductive investment in the social infrastructure which will have its own vicious implications for the Indian economy.

The allocational pattern of the Plan outlay with a bias towards the rural sector in the current financial year has more political overtones than the real one, with the given policy-design in the context of growing inequality without any check on it.

Agriculture is the most vital sector of the Indian economy. The Union Budget has made a provision of Rs 1918 crores Plan outlay for agriculture and animal husbandry. But the withdrawal of the Rs 340 crore fertiliser subsidy is expected to deal a blow to the farmer. The plan to restructure the agricultural credit system expects an increase of Rs 16,500 crores credit for investment in agriculture.

In fact, agriculture—which occupies a major space in the Indian economy—is completely privatised and has a close link with the commercial and industrial sectors through the market. Moreover, the rich farmers who command the process of production and surplus produce generation, and matter in Indian politics, are sensitive to the withdrawal of the fertiliser subsidy and agricultural prices. Hence agriculture has received some deal in the Union Budget in terms of Plan outlay, credit proposal and other agricultural growth-inducing programmes. In this way the rich farmers will be benefited from the current Budget while the vast multitudes of the peasantry are not going to profit from it.

Implications of the Budget

The implications of the Union Budget in the Indian economy cannot be assessed without comprehending those of the structural policy reforms, of which the Union Budget for 1993-94 is an integral part in the sense of operationalising the process of structural adjustment in the Indian economy. An in-depth analysis of the structural policy reforms will clearly demonstrate the Fund-Bank guided neo-classical theory of liberalisation and globalisation of the Indian economy in the neo-colonial setting of dependency structure. This neo-classical theory of liberalisation has a clear design to fully privatise the socio-economic structure of commodity production in order to decide and govern the process of economic growth through the free play of market forces in the name of efficient resource use and productivity increase. That is why a package of reform measures are introduced by the Narsimha Rao Government since 1991 for the establishment of a decontrol regime in the national economy of the country. The current budgetary efforts in continuity with the past two budgets are aimed at privatising the financial and manufacturing sectors by introducing the public sector disinvestment plan to mobilise resources through selling its equity shares in the open market; a measure to privatise the nationalised banks through the backdoor in terms of selling their equity in the market; a lower tariff regime with hefty cuts in excise and customs duties on a wide range of goods; a design to squeeze capital expenditure at a constant level; and an overall, full dependence on the free market economy to mobilise, allocate and use resources for investment in the manufacturing sector of the Indian economy.

Given the above picture of marketisation and privatisation of the home economy leading to its liberalisation in the neo-classical line, the full rupee convertibility on the trade account, the policy initiatives for the inflow of foreign investment through the process of bilateral negotiations and of joining the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency to reassure foreign investors on the security of their investments, the cut in capital gains tax for FII, etc. coupled with the allowance of foreign investment upto 49 per cent of equity in a large number of industries and investment of large foreign equity shares, even upto 100 per cent in select industries, especially export-oriented industries, clearly indicate the foreign investment-led path of development. In the light of the huge trade and current account deficit with a heavy dependence on foreign borrowing, the foreign investment-led process of development is nothing but a neo-colonial structure of dependency to which the Indian economy is being associated. The formulation of such dependency structure implies two things: first, unequal exchange of trade due to the operation of the comparative advantages theory of international trade; secondly, extraction of vital resources and raw materials from India to the developed countries which virtually control the foreign market, having monopolistic control over capital and technology.

Therefore, the third successive Union Budget of the Narasimha Rao Government is an act of instrumentalising the Fund-Bank backed neo-colonial setting of the economic dependency wherein the so-called market-oriented process of growth will function under the guidance of international monopoly capital finance and serve the interests of the developed countries enjoying a monopolistic control over capital finance. All this amounts to the complete reversal of the self-reliant independent capitalist process of development in favour of the dependent capitalist process of development in the country.

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GIVEN the trade deficit of Rs 4283 million dollars in 1992 (April-September) or the current account deficit of Rs 3996 million dollars during the same period and the total outstanding debt of Rs 71 billion dollars, that is, 27.3 per cent of the GDP in 1991-92, it is easy to comprehend the neo-colonial trappings of the Indian economy; that too on account of the neo-classical theory-based process of liberalisation resulting from the package of structural policy reforms in the trade and industrial sectors. The external debt servicing that accounts for 25 per cent of the current receipts compounded by the adverse balance of payments with structural export limits will strengthen the neo-colonial dependency structure all the more by leading to the debt trap in the near future.

The foreign investment-led growth in the industrial sector has always its own inbuilt limit on export promotion because of its alien interests. In fact, the whole socio-economic structure will be under the control of international monopolistic capital finance. In that case, many domestic industries will face destruction, the handloom and other cottage industries in which lakhs are engaged will be the worst victim. The Union Budget for 1993-94 has not taken any step for their protection.

The full convertibility of the rupee may enhance the import bill rather than increasing the export earnings in the first instance because of the elimination of the dual exchange rates system and the likely rise in the prices of petroleum products. Thus the argument that the reduction in the fiscal deficit to 4.5 per cent of the GDP will contain inflation is more hypothetical than real; more so, when the defence expenditure is about nine per cent and there have been a series of levies including the railway fare and freight hikes. The 32 per cent increase in the Plan outlay without resource mobilisation at home also throws doubts on the claims of containing price inflation.

The current Budget appears to be more inflationary and is also anti-poor because its thrust is against the generation of productive employment. In fact, the whole gamut of the structural policy reforms and the direction of the third successive Union Budget corresponding to the reforms indicates a marriage of convenience between the ruling party and classes and the imperial power in a neo-classical order under the neo-colonial setting of *'mandapum'* in a situation when enormous poverty, massive unemployment and high-cost economy exist and persist at the low level of productivity and technology in the commodity-producing sector.

Better to rule with ruins is the game of the ruling classes on the chessboard of political power. Therefore the ideas of liberty, equity and justice—the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Indian Constitution based on which the ruling classes govern the state in a democratic order and which inform all the institutions of our national life—have been given a go-by. Unless we face the present situation with all our democratic might we would be forced to surrender our sovereignty to the imperial power, as has been the policy of our government and is reflected in the Budget. ■

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- **A Vedic Concordance (Reprint)/***Maurice Bloomfield*
  An Index to the Vedic Mantras compiled by an enlightened American scholar. An unparalleled work of scholarship.
  1990, xxiii, 1078pp., Demy 8vo, Rs. 400
- **Naga Cult in Orissa/***Sadhu Charan Panda*
  It is an inter-disciplinary study of the ancient form of serpent worship in different parts of the world, in general and folk cult of Nagbacha in Orissa in particular.
  1986, xx, 142pp., Table, 24 B&W Plates, 1, Maps, Demy 8vo, Rs. 125

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BOOK REVIEW

Beyond the Secular Critique

AVIJIT PATHAK

Enough has already been written about this book, its secular mission, its critique of the Hindu Right. And when secular minds read it, they find sufficient reasons to celebrate it. A book of this kind—based on interviews conducted at Delhi, Khurja, Ayodhya and parts of central UP, combined with a study of the publications and media products of the RSS, BJP and VHP—acquires its relevance particularly at a time when the "secular foundations" of India are crumbling.

Although I am not as 'secular' as progressives want one to be and I am not so uneasy with my religiosity, I, nevertheless, regard this book as a piece of immensely meaningful creation. Because its authors—all are distinguished scholars known for their criticality and commitment to a secular culture—arouse my imagination and make me realise once again that an exclusivist, authoritarian politics has already appropriated and falsified the religion I adore. I accept this book, and request my friends, my students to read it. My religiosity is free enough to welcome this secular exercise.

Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags by Tapan Basu, Pradip Datta, Sumit Sarkar, Tanika Sarkar, Sambuddha Sen; pp. XI + 116; Orient Longman; 1993; Price Rs 35.

And that is the reason why I intend to go beyond the immediate relevance of the book and initiate a meaningful conversation with its authors. I am aware of the specific subject matter of this slim book. Yet, I would raise a couple of questions not directly related to the subject matter of the present text. I would raise these anxiety-ridden quesetions because, as I would argue, a secular critique of communalism (substantiated by well-researched historical documents), despite its relevance, would take one nowhere, if one is not very clear about tradition and modernity, religiosity and secularity, plurality and centrality. In other words, to read this book is to go beyond it. That is precisely its strength. But before everything let us identify some remarkable insights offered by this book divided into four well-written chapters.

a) Hindu Communalism and Mainstream Nationalism

The gigantic spread of *Hindutva* that we have been witnessing these days is not just a spontaneous mass movement. Behind it, the authors argue, lies "a whole history of meticulously organised efforts towards a *Hindu Rashtra*". This is indeed a complex phenomenon. Because majority communalism has got the advantage of projecting it as "national". That is why it is not impossible to see "an area of overlap in ideas and personnel between Hindu communalism and mainstream nationalism". Nevertheless, as the authors argue, there should be a dividng line. For the mainstream nationalists, it should not be forgotten, the principal target of attack was the mighty British rule. But what is striking is that "despite its enviable organisational strength and discipline, the RSS had remained consistently aloof from all movements against foreign rule".

b) Foundation of the RSS and its Historical Context

The emergence of the RSS in 1925 ought to be contextualised. It was in 1923 that *V.D. Savarkar* came forward with his controversial publication *Who Is a Hindu?* As one knows, it gave a new meaning to the aspirations of Hindu nationalism. This was not surprising. Because it was in the mid-1920s that India witnessed a massive communalisation of its political life. To quote the authors:

> the weakening, and eventual collapse, of the Congress-Khilafat alliance after Gandhi's unilateral withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement in February 1922 was followed by an unprecedented wave of riots.

It was in such an atmosphere of mutual mistrust that Hindu communalists began to legitimise themselves. What is equally important to note is the birth of the RSS in Maharashtra—a State, however, known for its Jyotiba Phules and Ambedkars who organised the backward castes

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and launched powerful anti-Brahmin movements. As the authors indicate, the birth of the RSS in Maharashtra was essentially "an upper caste bid to restore a slipping hegemony".

c) RSS Politico-Cultural Project

The RSS cultural project cannot be understood without understanding its fixation to Ram. Not surprisingly then, *Dr K.B. Hedgewar* chose *Vijaya Dashami* for the inaugration of the RSS—a day in which Ram was supposed to have defeated Ravana in that epic conflict between good and evil. Yet, one should not think that the RSS is merely a cultural organisation "without any political overtones". In fact, the notion of Hindu culture that is propagated in its *shakhas* is a definition of a "majoritarian and authoritarian *rashtra*". With *M.S. Golwalkar,* the man who led the RSS in the forties and fifties, the RSS brand of "cultural nationalism" got a new legitimacy. Golwalkar's *We or Our Nationhood Defined* revealed the RSS project rather unambiguously:

> the non-Hindu people in Hindustan must...adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and revere Hindu religion...

This "positive Hinduism" with its "paternalist model", according to the authors, was equally hostile to socialist/communist ideas.

d) RSS and its Disciplinary Devices

What characterises the RSS is its "iron discipline". In fact, the RSS cannot be understood without understanding its "pedagogical functions", the way it concentrates on teenage boys and through its "non-dialogic, non-argumentative mode of learning" makes them absolutely uncritical. Perhaps it is this uncriticality that continues to reproduce the core-doctrine of Hindu communalism:

i) Hindus and Hindus alone constitute the Indian nation, since they are the original inhabitants and sole creators of its society and culture.
ii) Hinduism is tolerant and hence superior to any faith.
iii) The Hindu nation has been repeatedly conquered by aliens, particularly Muslims.
iv) Muslims, being irrepressibly and aggressively lustful by nature, rape Hindu women and force Hindu wombs into producing Muslim progeny; their legalised polygamy enables them to breed at a great pace, so that the existing Hindu demographic majority is a fragile and vanishing reality and Muslims will soon outnumber Hindus.

And hence, as it is obvious, something must be done to resist this conspiracy launched by "Muslim traditions". This has become the iron fact of the RSS common sense. The primacy that the RSS attaches to its "pedagogical functions" explains its penetration into the world of schools. The first *Shishu Mandir,* the authors remind us, was set up at Gorakhpur in the 1950s and now 4000 such institutions are functioning all over the country.

e) Gender Ideology of Hindutva

It is interesting to note that "the RSS is virtually unique among modern Indian socio-political organisations in being exclusively male". It is, however, true that the RSS set up a women's branch, the *Rashtrasevika Samiti,* way back in 1936. But, then the *rashtrasevikas,* as we are told, have kept a rather "low profile". Not solely that. For the *rashtrasevikas,* nothing is more important than their family considerations. And it is this patriarchal ideal, the authors would argue, reaffirms itself when the *rashtrasevikas* are asked to see only immorality in "Western values" like widow remarriage and divorce and adultery! In other words, in the ideological construction of *Hindutva,* there is no notion of a free, emanicipated woman choosing her own life-project and destiny.

f) VHP and its Politics

With the birth of the VHP in 1969 Hindu communalism began to assert itself rather more sharply. Interestingly, the VHP has a service department which works mainly among Harijans and tribals. Yet, this pro-subaltern orientation, one does not take much time to realise, is merely a decorum. Because the militant, unified Hinduism was designed to offer a counter thrust to the OBCs while "disguising this with its public disavowal of caste". Moreover, the authors say, "the VHP-RSS track record reveals no sign of involvement with class struggles".

g) Hindutva Campaign and its Media Policy

And in our own times Hindu communalists with the clever use of modern technologies succeeded in creating new signs and images. For instance, "Sadhvi Rithambara," to quote the authors, "has become the first mass leader in our society who has been created by a recorded cassette". With her hypnotising voice she takes one to the battlefield: "once and for all" battle! Not solely that. With the twin images of Ram popularised through the posters and the stickers of the VHP—the image of *Ramlalla,* the child god, and the image of Ram as the mascuine warrior god—Hindu fundamentalists have succeeded in propagating their message among both men and women.

(h) *Hindutva and New Middle Class*

Finally, with their sociological imagination, the authors try to relate the "new form of religiosity" to the anxieties of the new middle class: a class characterised by fragmentation and competition. It is a class that needs an image of togetherness and collectivity and it is *Hindutva* that seeks to fulfil this need without, however, challenging its basic material and economic interests.

This is indeed a remarkable achievement. The book—written in a simple, lucid language free from jargons—reveals the design behind the madness. The book, in fact, should make one aware of the forces behind communalism—the forces that train and discipline one's mind, the forces that form an unholy alliance with the modern technocracy and take people to a world where nothing matters except the might of the majority community. In the battlefield one witnesses the seductive power of an invented/constructed tradition, its permanent *Other*! Fighting these forces is no easy proposition. Because communalism is not just for a few mad individuals. It has got everything: a theory, a doctrine, a pedagogy, a disciplinary force. It is not just another Rightist force. It is a force with a mission!

That is why reading this book is also an occasion to go for self-reflection, to examine/re-examine the possibility of an alternative worldview needed to combat the growing communalism. Neeladri Bhattacharya (Editor, the series *Tracts* *or the Times*) writes in his preface:

> The authors end with a plea for an alternate secular culture...
>
> But this cultural project requires that we not only rethink the concepts and language of our secular discourse, but think of imaginative ways of constituting this secular culture.

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THIS stimulates us to reflect on secularism. It goes without saying that secularism as a desirable project—a project related to the universal mission of modernisation—creates its own hierarchy. Secularism, being a reflection of a modern mind, is based on a series of binary oppositions: universal reason versus localised cultural fixation; scientific public domain of politics and economy versus religious/private domain of beliefs and practices. Secularism seeks to emancipate reason from its local/historical aberrations. It intends to establish the superiority of scientific objectivity. Because of its very nature secularism tends to see religion as a residue of the past, as a reflection of a mind yet to reach the higher stage of evolution. A believer has to justify himself in a secular world. But a secularist is a secularist: modern and progressive. His ideal is normal, non-problematic. Any deviance from it is necessarily pathological! In other words, secularism cannot tolerate unlicensed differences. While it can certainly tolerate divergent secular views (liberal democracy or socialism), it is, however, uneasy with magic, religion or non-scientific ways of living in the world.

The question is: should one accept this project uncritically? Why should one be so unambiguous towards the desirability of secularism? I admit I am not one of those who celebrate *post-modernism* and plead for hard *relativism*. Nevertheless, I believe that a modern mind, paradoxically, is exclusivist. Order is the mission of modernisation. Its perception of a rational/secular order tends to annihilate all that it cannot comphrehend: man's religiosity or his non-linear notion of time. Again, secularism may fail—and fail miserably—to provide meaningful answers to the questions one considers important—the questions related to the meaning of life, its finitude, death, suffering and pain. This depthlessness—a necessary consequence of the secular preoccupation with the phenomenal world completely cut off from the transcendental realm—may cause widespread violence—the violence perpetuated by modern nation-states to accomplish the global ambitions of modernisation. Secularism is not as pious as one is asked to believe.

That is why, far from pleading for a homogenised secular culture, I would imagine the possibility of a *plural society comfortable with differences*, a society that allows the multiplicity of worldviews: secular and non-secular, modern and traditional. Not solely that. I would imagine the existence of a subject having plurality of identities without any hierarchy, without any oppressive centre. This does not mean that I am speaking of absolute anarchy or absolute schizophrenia. Instead, I suggest a dialogical possibility, an attempt to arrive at a mediating point without, however, absolutising it.

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AND the primary threat to my vision is the rationale of homogenisation. The authors have done a remarkable job by revealing the process of homogenisation implicit in the exclusivist politics of the BJP-RSS-VHP nexus. But the point is that almost all the vices the authors see in the politics of Hindu communalism can be found even in many "secular"/"nationalist" organisations. The non-dialogical pedagogical feature, for instance, can be seen even in Marxist organisations. I am not very sure whether in terms of its exclusivist character there is fundamentally any difference between *Organiser* and *People's Democracy*. Isn't it a fact that it is the same homogenisation many secular nationalists are striving for when, in the name of abstracted Indianness, they want us to overcome our local identities? If the newly constructed *Jai Santoshi Ma* denies local gods and goddesses, the so-called secular/national aspirations too deny our local aspirations. Homogenisation is coming not solely from Ramanand Sagar's *Ramayan*, it is coming even from the 'progressive' texts on development and progress.

The fact is that in India both the communalists and the secularists celebrate the same logic of modernity. All of them are striving for order, for hierarchy, for a fixed centre. If the secularists deny religion, the communalists appropriate it through a rationale that is purely modern. If the secularists, in order to propagate reason, want to overcome traditional fixations, the communalists invent tradition in a ruthlessly authoritarian fashion.

But perhaps things are changing. While using the term *Hindutva* the authors remind us:

> We use this term throughout not in the sense of Hinduism, but to indicate the contemporary communal organisations and movements that use this banner.

What does it mean? Perhaps it means that the authors too distinguish between good Hinduism and bad Hinduism. In other words, they are perhaps willing to see even the emancipatory potential in Hinduism, if rescued from the BJP-RSS-VHP nexus. Otherwise, their caution makes no sense. Interestingly, these days even a Stalinist Marxist like Sitaram Yechuri is quoting Swami Vivekananda and fighting the "pseudo-Hinduism" of the BJP variety! In other words, secularists are really rethinking their priorities.

That is why the question: Are Professor Sumit Sarkar and his colleagues willing to reflect on the politics of secularism? One wants them to write a book reflecting on the discontents of secularism. I expect because I take them so seriously. Meanwhile, while appreciating their book, I would continue to celebrate my dream: the dream of a plural world in which Professor Sarkar with his enlightened Marxism exists together with a believer seeing great virtues in the *Ramayan* and the *Bhagavadgita*. It is the dream of a world in which modern secular reason is just one way among many other ways of living and seeing. Because it is only in such a world that the vices Professor Sarkar and his colleagues see in the BJP-RSS-VHP nexus can be fought effectively. ■

COMMUNICATION

Second Massacre of Rakshasas!

It was not surprising to read S.S. Gill's piece "The Second Exile of Ram" in *Mainstream* (Febraury 13, 1993). What is shocking is *Mainstream*, a well-known Left periodical, publishing this dangerous revivalism.

Gill runs down Kaikeyi as a 'scheming stepmother'. Dasaratha not only married his sister Kausalyas in order to become a king of the Kosala *rajaka*, but married an alien princess, a daughter of the Kekayas, in order to subvert even the matrilineal right of Kausalya's offspring to Kosala kingship. Rama told Bharata that Kaikeyi was blameless, for it was Dasaratha who had married Kaikeyi on the promise of giving the Kosala kingdom to her son (*Ayodhya*, 108.3). Rama defended Kaikeyi not simply because of his devotion to his so-called father, but because he wanted to perpetuate the new rule of patriarchal succession laid down by Dasaratha. I use the epithet 'so-called', because Rama and his brothers were the 'field-born' (*kshetraja*) sons of Dasaratha. The sower (*bijin*) father was the Brahman Rshyasrnga.

If Rama obeyed public opinion when he exiled

Sita—though it is totally undemocratic to consider a washerman as the accredited representative of the Kosala tribesmen—what public opinion did he obey when he promised the Brahmana colonisers that he would annihilate the *rakshasas*? Were these Brahmama colonisers of South India his subjects? On the contrary, as an exile compelled to seek refuge in the gynocracy of Janasthana ruled by the *rakshasi* Surpanakha, he was a subject of the *rakshasas*. Sita reminded him of the social reality and admonished him for giving an ungrateful promise to the Brahmana colonisers. What was the answer the 'gentle prince, self-effacing, compassionate and pious', gave to his 'faithful' spouse? It is better to quote his Supreme God for whom the BJP (and the *Sangh Parivar*) is trampling the Constitution and insulting the judiciary:

> *Apy aham jivitam jahyam tvam va Site sa-Lakshmanam*
> *Na tu pratijnam samsrtya Brahmanebhyo viseshatach.*
> (*Aranya*, 10.18)

He told her that he would prefer to abandon her than break the promise he had given to the Brahmanas. This promise to the Brahmanas, the god on earth, was an eye-wash; the real purpose is made clear by another Brahmana coloniser, no less than Visvamitra, who ordered Rama to kill the *rakshasi*, Tataka, the queen of the gynocratic Malada-Karushas, in the interests of the four *varna* religion:

> *Nahi te stri-vadha-Krte ghrna karya narottama!*
> *Chatur-Varnya-hitarthem hi kartavvam raja sununa*
> (*Bala*, 25.17)

And the 'compassionate' Rama did not take mercy (*ghrna*) on that hospitable and innocent queen, but killed her in order to crush her egalitarian gynocracy and establish inegalitarian *chatur-varnya*.

Being ex-Secretary of the Union Ministry for Information and Broadcasting, Gill is authorised to tell the ignorant and illiterate Indians that Rama 'yet strove hard to establish the most just and benign rule for the people...' That is why this most just ruler considered it the greatest of sacrileges that a wretched Sudra like Sambuka should aspire to ascend bodily to heaven like the twice-borns of the upper three *varnas* through penance and hence swiftly decapitated him (*Uttara*, 67.1-4). But the law-givers were more businesslike than the pious Rama. The real offence of Sambuka, according to Manu, was to give up productive work that was obligatory for his *varna*:

> (IX) 418. (The king) should carefully compel Vaisyas and Sudras to perform the work (prescribed) for them; for if these two (castes) swerved from their duties, they would throw this (whole) world into confusion.

That is why the BJP and the *Sangh Parivar* firmly believe that the most just rule for this hopeless country will be the Hindu, Brahmanical one. But Indian women have become restive like Sita. Well, then let them be compelled to follow the 'self-immolating' path of Roop Kunwar. The modern Sudras, Dalits, Adivasis and OBCs have become ambitious. Let them be chastised by taking away their reservation. The modern *rakshasas*, the Muslims and other religious minorities refuse to become second class citizens in the *Hindu Rashtra*. Let them be massacred for the seond time!

'Asantosh'
Dhule-424 002 *Sharad Patil*

Editor's Note:

While respecting the views of Sharad Patil—and we are well aware that such opinions are shared by many of our fellow citizens long subjected to persecution based on social prejudices—we wish to reassure him that *Mainstream* does not subscribe to the "dangerous revivalism" as mentioned in his letter. It is clear that Sharad Patil's pronouncements on Ram are quite at variance with the contentions of S.S. Gill. However, we feel that while he is at liberty to criticise Gill's contentions, his attribution of motives to Gill—branding the latter as a "revivalist" by implication—is unfair. The whole purpose of Gill's article was to dissociate Ram—on the basis of his life-story as understood by Gill—from the BJP's hate campaign, and thus expose the hollowness of the *Sangh Parivar*'s propaganda around Ram. Sharad Patil's views on Ram are obviously different and he is free to hold and air them in public. But the very fact that Sharad Patil is able to freely express himself on the subject without let or hindrance is a tribute to our pluralist democracy which is currently under severe attack from those who seek to impose theocracy of the majoritarian variety on the country. In order to defend that pluralist democracy and defeat the pernicious designs of the aforementioned elements who destroyed the Babri mosque, the entire spectrum of our liberal intelligentsia—from S.S. Gill to Sharad Patil—must unite, for the danger before us is much too serious and can be ignored only at our peril. ■

Deciphering the Oriya-Indian Symbiosis

SUBHAKANTA BEHERA

The following article by a young Oriya officer of the Indian Foreign Service is being published on the occasion of Orissa Day which falls on April 1. —Editor

How would you introduce the Oriya? Like any other nationality, the Oriya is also a linguistic-ethnic nationality with some typical connotations which *ipso facto* go together with the members belonging to the Oriya nationality. But this introduction of the Oriya is half-way through since it does not bring out a complete, holistic picture of the Oriyas. An Oriya is an Oriya only when he is an India, that is to say, the identity of the Oriya has to be substantiated by a reference to the Indian. This Oriya-Indian identity is rooted deep in history, and now an integral part of the way of life of an Oriya.

How far has Orissa integrated itself to India? Orissa has always been a part and parcel of India or *Bharatavarsha*. In the fourth century AD when Kalidasa wrote his *Raghuvansam,* he referred to Kalinga, the ancient name of this region. Another ancient but popular name of Orissa, that is, Utkal, appears in both *Mahabharat* and *Ramayan.* The Vedic and early Brahmanical works, the Pali literature contain references to Kalinga. The Puranas like the Vayu, Matya and Brahmand—mention the names of the main ruling dynasties of India together with thirtytwo Kshatriya kings who ruled over Kalinga. Thus, the land of Orissa was never an isolated geographical entity nor an unexplored land for the outsiders in the past.

At different points of history either Orissa was made a part of a big empire or it independently played a role affecting India as a whole. While Orissa was a part of the Mauryan empire, it became an independent empire under Mahameghavahana Kharavela, and from seventh century AD onwards, Orissa had independent ruling dynasties till the third quarter of the sixteenth century. Thereafter it passed on to the reigns of the Muslims, Marathas and British respectively. The ruling dynasties of Orissa—like the Gangas and Suryavamsis—had not only extended the territories of Orissa but also carved a niche for Orissa in the political world of India. Kapilendradevea (1435-1467 AD) of the Survyavamsis has been described as the founder of the Orissa empire because he conquered some portions of South-West Bengal, subjugated Rajamundry, Kondavidu, Telengana, etc. and captured some parts of Vijayanagar empire. Thus Orissa had always been a 'factor' in Indian politics.

The land of Orissa, in different times, had extended from the river Ganges to the river Godavari; it came under many political powers such as Maurya, Chedi, Gupta, Bhaumakara, Ganga, Suryavamsi, Pathan, Mughal, Maratha and the British. When Orissa finally came under the British, it became a part of the British empire. But by that time this land had been scattered; parts of the land had formed parts of other provinces. However, finally at the behest of the Oriyas, the Oriya-speaking areas were integrated to form a separate Orissa province in April 1936.

If politico-geographically Orissa has all along been an inevitable part of India, it has been equally a complement to the Indian culture, literature, etc. Orissa has been always a rich contributory to the mainstream of the Indian culture. The foundation of Orissan culture was laid down by an intermixture of Aushtrik, Dravidian and Aryan elements. This cosmopolitanism is well revealed in the Oriya language and script, religious tradition, culture, etc. The Oriya script has developed from a synthesis of Aushtrik, Dravidian and Aryan elements. Early Oriya language belonged to the Aushtrik family. Similarly, many religious rituals and gods and goddesses of Orissa have their origin in the Aushtriks and Dravidians. The ritual of workship to goddess originally belonged to the Dravidians. The national god of Orissa, Lord Jagannath, is stated to be originally the deity of the Savanas, the Aushtrik people. The great Oriya poet, Sarala Dasa's *Mahabharat* relates how Sri Krishna's dead body came floating from Dvarika to Puri and turned into wood, and how Jana Savana and his wife, Lalita, got it and worshipped it in a dense forest secretly for several years. Though it is difficult to establish the historicity of this legened, it points to the Savana origin of the Jagannath shrine which was then made a Brahmanical deity. It is maintained that the images—now known as Jagannath, Subhadra and Balabhadra—were originally *triratna* symbols worshipped by the 'primitive' Savanas, and the Savana origin is further sought to be supported by the existence in the Jagannath temple of a class of servants known as Daitapatis who claim their descent from the Brahmin, Vidyapti, through the Savana mother, Lalita.

Like in any other part of India, in Orissa also many of the religious beliefs, rituals, social traditions, faith in interlink of life and death, etc. have come from the Aushtriks and Dravidians. The main religious festivals of Orissa—Rathyatra, Snanayatra, Dolayatra and Rajaparva are supposed to have originated from the Adivasis.

Thus the foundation of Orissan culture, religion, etc. was a synthesis of both the Aryan and non-Aryan elements. Whatever is Orissan culture, is transmitted from generation to generation, and in the course of this transmission many additions and subtractions have taken place, thus making it more typical, uniquely Orissan. These modifications were brought about by interactions and contacts that Orissa had with the outside world either under political subjugation or through cultural relationship and goodwill exchange.

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BUT in spite of so may diverse currents meeting together in one point, Orissa has a unique inbuilt capacity to synthesise all of them into one current which flows down the generations. This homogenisation has paid rich dividends to Orissa, in terms of religion, culture, literature, art, architecture, etc.

Take the example of the religious trend in Orissa. It has served as cradle to many a religious faith and sect. History tells us how at different times, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Islam had their sway over this land. The teachings and sermons of such religious saints as Shankara, Ramanuja, Nimbark, Kumarila Bhatta and Sri Chaitanya have been so well accepted in Orissa that both *jnana* (knowledge) and *bhakti* (devotion) are equally recognised here as means to reach god. This cosmopolitanism is best revealed in the Jagannath cult which determines the Oriyas' perception of life. The Jagannath cult, veering round the Oriya national deity, Lord Jagannath, presents a consmopolitan faith, as diverse streams of Hinduism, such as Vaishnava, Shaiva, Saura, Ganapatya and Shakta, together with the Savana-aushtrik tradition, and Buddhist and Jaina traditions were welded together into a typical form of religion of Lord Jagannath, the Jagannath cult. Moreover, many great saints like Shankara, Ramananda, Ramanuja, Madhava Tirtha, Narahari Tirtha, Kabir, Nanak and Sri Chaitanya had visited Lord Jagannath, and by way of their association with him, they contributed to the growth of catholicity of the Jagannath cult. The Muslim saint-poet, Salabega, and the lowcaste Hindu, Dasia, were also supposed to be great devotees of Lord Jagannath. Thus, because of its catholicity, the Jagannath cult has become a symbol of equality, fraternity and harmony. Needless to mention that this is a rare but unique example of how a religious cult has developed a cosmopolitan nature, thereby making it accessible to all irrespective of caste, creed and faith.

In architecture and sculpture, Orissa has a rich, glorious and distinct tradition of its own. Here one finds rockcut caves for Jaina monks in the hills of Udayagiri and Khandagiri, Buddhist *stupas* and monasteries, and superb temples. Particularly in temple architecture, Orissa had developed its own style which came to be known as the Kalinga type. It was included in other types of temples—such as Nagara, Besara and Dravida—prevalent in India. The Kalinga type employed the *rekha* consisting of a square sanctum surmounted by a curvilinear spire, and the *pidha* (*mandapa*), a frontal hall consisting of square structure covered by a pyramidal roof of receding steps. In the Kalinga type temples, one finds the cell to be generally smaller and less spacious than the porch. This is in conformity with the Hindu religious practice for the cell is meant for a short glimpse of the daily and ritual worship whereas the porch is meant for congregation where devotees offer their prayer. These structures were added by two more structures on the same axis, known as *nata mandira* (festive hall) and *bhoga mandap* (hall of offering). The Kalinga type is best represented in the Lingaraja temple of Bhubaneswar, the Jagannath temple of

Puri and the Sun temple of Konark. All these temples possess a unique position in Indian art and architecture, and their bold conception, massive execution, sculptural beauty, and perfect proportions speak of a unique, distinct Orissan style different from the others.

In sculpture too, Orissa enjoys a distinct place in India. Either in non-iconic sculptures such as decorative female figures, animal figures, erotic sculpture, etc. or in cult images pertaining to different religions and sects, the Orissan sculpture was always at its best. It has its distinct Orissan stamp which discriminates it from other Indian sculptures. For example, the wheels of Konark are different from those found in South India, and the Sun images of Orissa are totally different from the Surya figures of South India where the feet of the god images are left bare.

If Orissan art occupies a distinct but glorious position in the world of art, then Oriya literature also does not lag behind. It has a rich tradition and glorious present by virture of which it can claim a distinct and separate place in Indian literature. The most important aspect of Oriya literature is the timely response of Oriya litterateures to the call of the time, and accordingly their literature has been a commitment to the society, its needs, its prejudices, and so on. In the early centuries of the Oriya literature, poets like Sarala Dasa and Pancha Sakhas (five friends) such as Jagannatha Dasa, Balarama Dasa, Yasovanta Dasa, Ananta Dasa and Achyutananda Dasa had a distinct vision of life. They declared that they had composed their works for the benefit of the 'entire world', 'all people', and 'all creatures'. They were against the prevailing social disparities and untouchability which compelled them to raise a voice of protest in their writings. The sentiment against casteism was so strong with Pancha Sakha poets that despite their birth in high caste, they proclaimed themselves as Dasas, the servants of God; they also wrote Sanskrit *Ramayan, Mahabharat, Bhagavad Gita*, etc. in Oriya so that everybody in society irrespective of his caste, could have access to these classical works hitherto written in Sanskrit and reserved for the high castes.

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FELLOW-FEELING and world-view have been another hallmark of Oriya literature even in the early centuries. For instance, the Adivasi poet, Bhimabhoi, declared that 'he maight suffer in the Hell, but let the *jagata* (world) be rescued'. An intense passion for establishing 'man to man' relation was vividly reflected in the *Kavyas, Stutis, Jananas*, etc. of the early poets. So can't we call them early 'humanists'?

The tradition established by early Oriya poets has been carried on to modern Oriya literature but in different format and thematic context. The same voice of protest, fellow-feeling and passion for 'Man' can be found in the writings of poets, novelists and story-writers of the modern times but the context is contemporary. In recent times, either the poetry of Sachi Rautray, Guruprasad Mohanty, Ramakanta Rath or novels of Surendra Mohanty, Gopinath Mohanty or for that matter a creative literary piece of any young Oriya writer brings out the 'spirit and essence' of the age. So in other words Oriya literature is always faithful to the time to which it belongs; but the sensibilities and predicaments of man concerning his age, have all along made Oriya litterateurs the most 'desirable, but traditional humanists'. The best examples are Guruprasad's magnum opus *Kalapurush* and Gopinath's *Mati Matla*, or for that matter poems of Radhamohan Godnayak, Sachi Routray, etc. wherein the thematic treatment is basically Man-oriented, but less romantic or other-worldly.

On the other hand, we have the classical Oddissi dance which has its distinctive style different from six other classical dances of India. It is a dance of delight with a lyrical flavour and a dance 'celebrating' god. The Odissi style developed from the Mahari tradition (female dancers of temples) and Gotipua system (young boys dressed as females), both of which were ritualistic dances in honour of the Lord. Sublime, serene and delicate in mood, Odissi is supposed to be a divine art despite its being wedded to the sentiment of intense passion for union. But this union is a divine blissful union, represented by the dancer as the struggle of the devotee's soul for divine communion, and ultimate fulfilment. In comparison to other forms of classical dances, Odissi is rich with poses, both ornamental and suggestive, which exude life. But its speciality is the consummate art with which it has exploited the 'threebend' configuration of Hindu iconography. This means that if the legs incline to one side, the torso goes in the opposite direction and the head follows the line of the legs.

A glimpse of Oddisi recital either by veteran

Sonal Mansingh or Kiran Saigal or by any budding youngster like Rajashree Chintak or Sangeeta Das, unmistakably makes the audience spellbound, and frenzied in an aura of divine ecstasy with an esoteric feeling. As if eternal search for realisation of infinity in finitude is finally complete!

Thus Orissa enjoys a unique distinction of having distinctness in all fields, from religion to arts. This distinctness does not separate Orissa from India, rather acts as an essential contributory to the composite Indian culture. The Kalinga architecture is a part of Indian architecture; the Jagannath cult is a part of Indian religious tradition; Oriya literature is a component of Indian literature; and so on. Perhaps this is the best example where part completes the whole, but part does not remain a part once taken out of the whole. It becomes a complete entity by itself. This is the essence of what we call the "Oriya". ◆

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TRIBUTE

Mazhar Ali Khan

INDER MOHAN

Mainstream *(February 27, 1993) carried a tribute by I.K. Gujral on the fearless Pakistani patriot and journalist, Mazhar Ali Khan, who passed away in Lahore on January 28, 1993. The following is another tribute by another friend and colleague of Mazhar in the pre-partition days.* —Editor

Mazhar's sad demise caused intense grief. He had been having frail health for some time, particularly after his heart-ailment and its treatment. We all thought that in view of his strong determination and will power he would live longer. Soon after I heard this news, somehow I got lost and absorbed in the Lahore of 1940 onwards. Needless to say, our links continued during the post-partition period.

As a matter of fact I met Mazhar for the first time at the Ramgarh (Bihar) Congress session in 1940. That was my first exposure to a political session and that too of the All-India Congress Committee (AICC). Mazhar and his brother, the late Mahmud Ali Khan, were both there, and all of us from Lahore who went to Ramgarh had stayed in the same large hut. In those days right from the topmost national leaders, including Gandhiji, to delegates and others—all stayed in clean, tidy huts. There were no security forces except volunteers who maintained very good discipline.

Although Mazhar and Mahmud were known Leftists and active members of the Communist Party of India (CPI), Mahmud was nominated Member of the All-India Congress Committee at the behest of Jawaharlal Nehru. In those days the Communists and Socialists could also join the Congress if they so wished, as their respective constitutions permitted dual membership. Of course there was a common bond in the struggle for freedom from imperialist rule.

I was still a student and very new to Leftist politics. Mazhar, on his part, had emerged as an all-India student leader and an effective public speaker. His speeches were Leftist-oriented with a subtle sense of humour.

Mazhar was elected the President of the All-India Students' Federation. In those very days I got elected first as the General Secretary of the

Lahore Students' Union and after some time its President.

Pre-partition Lahore happened to be the most important centre for educational and cultural renaissance in northern India. It was in this background that the student community of Lahore became actively involved in the freedom struggle. Those were really the days! Union elections in colleges and subsequent Lahore University elections were always very smooth and dignified. Neither money nor political parties ever dominated the elections at all. University and college elections were free and fair in the real sense. The Students' Federation, under the leadership of Mazhar Ali Khan and others, had become a force to be reckoned with. Our calls for student strikes were always successful.

During this period Mazhar was arrested. His elder brother, Mahmud Ali, was already in jail. The Unionist Ministry headed by Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan was then ruling Punjab. (Unpartitioned Punjab had a very large territory under Sikandar Hayat Khan's jurisdiction. He was designated as the Prime Minister of Punjab.) Sir Sikandar also happened to be the maternal uncle of Mazhar. His mother, Begum Nawab Muzaffar Ali Khan, made it a point to convey to her brother, Sir Sikandar, her protest on the telephone. She told him that she was proud of both her sons who were in jail and demanded their release. She also conveyed that she could not understand why Mahmud and Mazhar were arrested. They were fighting for the freedom of the country and she concluded her protest by telling her Prime Minister brother: "Thank God, my sons are not toadies!"

Although Mazhar belonged to a family of upper middle class landed aristocracy, his courage of Leftist conviction had brought him closer to the people. He responded positively to the man-made social, economic and political problems unjustly faced by them in their day to day life. This quality of Mazhar was amply reflected in his career as a journalist. The then prestigious daily, *Pakistan Times*, started by the late Mian Iftkhar-ud-din, had the late legendary poet, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, as its Editor. After Faiz's incarceration for over five years Mazhar was appointed the editor of *Pakistan Times*. His progressive views enhanced the vast popularity of *Pakistan Times*. After the Pakistan Government took over *Pakistan Times*, Mazhar started his own journal *Viewpoint*. He boldly stood his ground under different military regimes in Pakistan.

There is another distinctive aspect of Mazhar. As an independent journalist, Mazhar was in a position to have an easy access to Ayoob Khan, the Bhuttos and in India to Nehru and Indira Gandhi. This factor never deflected Mazhar from voicing and fighting for issues and causes concerning the day-to-day life of the people.

In his last days he had to wind up *Viewpoint* with a heavy heart partly due to his health and partly due to the paucity of resources.

Mazhar has left a legacy which is being carried further by the activities of his courageous wife, Tahira, who has been actively participating in women's movements for equal rights and by his well-known author-cum-journalist son, Tariq Ali. ■

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Indian Handlooms Face Extinction

Prime Minister leaves Weavers in the Lurch

NAZIRUL HASAN ANSARI

This article, even if a bit dated, is being published in view of its significance in amplifying the plight of the handloom weavers who have been hit hard as a result of the Union Government's new economic policies. The author is the General Secretary of the All India Weavers' Federation. —Editor

A hurriedly summoned 'All-Indian Handloom Weavers Convention', held in Delhi on February 19-20, came to an abrupt end in complete disarray. It was the plenary open session of the convention in the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium on February 20 forenoon, that caused the big upset, giving a jolt to the sponsors and organisers of this two-day national weavers' conclave as well as to all those who came to attend it all the way from all over the country. There were several thousands of them, who had undergone all security hazards to find entry in the stadium well before time. The expectations were high. They had assembled there to listen to the Prime Minister making important and positive announcements in regard to the most crucial and basic problems confronting the handloom industry and multi-million workforce of weaver-artisans who depended on it for their daily bread.

In his welcome address Rahmatullah Ansari, Chairman of the Reception Committee (and a former Member of the Planning Commission) had categorically pronounced the weavers' expectations from the Prime Minister. He had sought the Prime Minister's *'positive committed response'* to the handloom weavers' demands, that were catalogued in his welcome address. It contained an impassioned and earnest appeal to the Prime Miniser for "firm steps to implement the demands made by the weavers". He had also urged the Textile Minister, G. Venkat Swamy, "to play his due role and mobilise all resources of his Ministry to implement each and every scheme mentioned here and demanded by weavers in their resolutions in a time-bound frame".

He had further emphasised the need for speedy implementation of schemes and cogently pleaded for all-out resource mobilisation on the part of the Textile Ministry. No doubt there was a spontaneous and warm response from the congregation waiting as the assembled gathering was for a positive outcome of the meet.

But all expectations were belied with the inaugural speech of the Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao. The weaver delegates left in extreme rancour and remorse. Quite a few could be heard asking their companions: "Did we come here to sing a requiem?" That demonstrated the hurt feelings of one and all.

Narasimha Rao made no policy announcement. He did not spell out any praxis, nor did he offer any immediate relief on succour to the weavers. On issues as crucial as procurement of yarn in hank form of desired quality on reasonable rates for the benefit of the handloom sector, he remained tongue-tied. About halting the abnormal and abrupt price hike in all varieties of yarn, in and out of season, he was equally non-committal. He kept his mouth shut about any reformulation and restructuring of the present textile policy. There was no sense of concern in his voice over the ongoing crisis confronting the handloom sector, leading to the extinction and annihilation of handlooms. Large-scale displacement and subsequent destitution of a great majority of weavers all over the country also meant nothing to the Prime Minister who, incidentally, belongs to the State of Andhra Pradesh which had witnessed the horrifying phenomenon of *suicides and starvation deaths* of hungry and haunted handloom weavers in the year 1991, the death toll being *one hundred and fifty*. It would be apt to recall that such a grim tragedy had occurred within hundred days of induction of Narasimha Rao as the Prime Minister. Even at the time of that calamity, he had kept mum. And at the convention he did not come out with any poverty alleviation programme for weavers.

His total reticence on such vital matters only added insult to injury. He refused to commit anything to anyone on any count whatsoever. Most saddened and crestfallen indeed was the Textile Minister, G. Venkat Swamy. Being a vociferous advocate of this national level handloom weavers' convention in Delhi this new incumbent in the Textile Ministry had really worked overtime for the successful organisation of the convention, by building quick rapport with a cross-section of the personages and organisations connected with the handloom industry and the weavers' movement. As a sequel to his initiative, a fortnight earlier, a weaver representatives' meet had been organised on February 2 under the aegis of the Development Commissioner of Handlooms at Andhra Bhavan, New Delhi. This day-long meet had had meaningful deliberations on the whole gamut of problems related to handlooms. Venkat Swamy himself took pains to sit through the meet. It was at this meet that he made the announcement regarding the holding of a larger and broader national convention in Delhi on February 19-20 and that it would be inaugurated by the Prime Minister. Not everybody agreed with his idea of organising such a meet in haste. He was told to have the convention at a later date so as to ensure wider mobilisation and preparation. But he did not budge an inch and the original date (February 19-20) remained unchanged.

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WHAT appears to have weighed heavily with Venkat Swamy was the assured participation of the Prime Minister whose 'commitment' to inaugurate this convention remained the sole motivation of the Textile Minister, and this made him rebut all other suggestions regarding alternate dates, etc. almost thoughtlessly. The idea of enlarging the scope of the convention, by inviting weaver representatives from all important handloom centres in different States and by persuading all weavers' organisations cutting across political and organisational loyalties and divides, to participate in this national meet for making it truly national and all-embracing, was also dismissed by the Textile Minister.

The Textile Minister was over-confident of securing a lot by bringing the Prime Minister on the centre-stage of this convention and this made him brush aside everything else. His belief and faith in the capacity of the Prime Minister to deliver the goods were undoubtedly sincere but eventually it was established that he was naive in reposing so much trust in Narasimha Rao.

As is evident now after everything is over, that bringing the Prime Minister to the convention with an empty brief was a major folly on the part of the Textile Minister, who could have achieved much more singly without such a head of government whose political stock is at the lowest at the moment and no gimmickry would have enhanced his credibility. I personally do not have doubts about the bonafides of the Textile Minister. I have also no reservations about his agility and verve which helped him to organise two meets at the national level of handloom weavers (though at government cost and official expense, but that is of secondary importance when the motive is to serve a right cause) within 100 days of his assumption of charge of the Textile Ministry. As compared to his erstwhile predecessors, Sharad Yadav and Ashok Gehlot, the record of G. Venkat Swamy on this count has been remarkable by any reckoning. His chief merit lies in priority identification of the most vulnerable segment of the multi-ramified textile industry—the handloom sector. The other two former Textile Ministers had performed things in reverse gear, pampering only to the perfidious mill sector and had been executing policies that went the whole hog in favour of cotton and cotton yarn exporters to the detriment of the handicapped handloom weavers.

Sharad Yadav talked only nonsense with the weavers representatives in a make-believe posture of arrogance, trying to teach them Hindi first. The handloom sector had remained an anathema to him during his entire tenure. His dismal conduct was his zero performance in checkmating the hike in yarn prices despite the weavers repeated representations made to him on this one crucial score and despite his own demonstrative bravado about doing everything, accompanied by his characteristic foolhardiness. His single-track record had been one of promoting bullies and sharks in the chaotic world of Indian textiles. Thus he only added to the chaos, thereby undermining the most vulnerable segment of our society. Ashok Gehlot, on the other hand, indulged in all the guile and foul play against the handloom sector and also against the hard-hit sections of the decentralised weaving sector, offering bonanzas to the exporters of yarn.

While prices of cotton yarn were rising sky-high, he was rushing through for organising and ordering cotton yarn exports under direct pressure from the profiteers of the yarn exporting lobby. At the same time to ward off the weavers' move against this 'exporting business', he was making false statements in and outside Parliament, one after the other, regarding the yarn export stoppages and so on. Ashok Gehlot was in saddle when starvation deaths were stalking Andhra Pradesh villages, and weavers were taking extreme steps, in sheer desperation, of ending their lives by committing suicides. At this tragic moment he sat tight, without even raising his little finger, and refused to answer such letters which sought to organise relief for the afflicted and distressed weavers of Andhra.

I don't mean to indict these erstwhile Textile Ministers by citing some factual facets of their thinking and working. It is just by way of an illustration.

The weaver representatives would have to be vigilant about the double-speak and dual-practice of the self-styled benefactors of the poor and the weak.

But above all what stood out at the convention was the Prime Minister's non-committal stance, which was not fortuitous, but well-thought out, deliberate and calculated. His inaugural speech carried the content in full accordance with the specifics of his brief. Let this be clear to all who may be inclined to believe that the Prime Minister had not been properly briefed. Such a notion would be false bordering on naivete. He is well aware of the problems confronting handlooms. He is conscious of the textile policy parameters of this government, how those have wrought havoc to the decentralised handloom sector for the past several decades. His commitment is for the same policy and not for handlooms. This should be understood by all, including the present Union Minister for Textiles who holds independent charge of this vital portfolio.

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TILL such time as the present policy continues, nothing can save and salvage handlooms from annihilation and extinction. This had been the key question to be deliberated and clinched by framing alternate policy parameters, replacing the present one. But the February convention failed to grapple with it because it had not been summoned to work out an alternate textile policy in place of the one that had been launched way back in 1985 under the Rajiv Gandhi dispensation. The convention participants, looking askance, in utter bewilderness, were denied even platitudes over policy replacement. Those feeling enthused about the fact that it was the first occasion when a Prime Minister would inaugurate a handloom weavers' convention, were later flabbergasted. All of them were confident of securing something. Most of them had come to the convention with that fond hope. What was the Textile Ministry's objective of convening the national handloom meet? On February 2, in the preliminary weavers' meet in Delhi's Andhra Bhavan, when some people had questioned about the utility of the proposed convention in such a short time and enquired from the Textile Minister his motivations, G. Venkat Swamy made the bold assertion of 'doing something' for the dwindling handlooms and poverty-stricken underprivileged weavers. He spelled out 'doing something *revolutionary*', changing the basic structure of the strategy of handloom development. And this implicitly meant that he, on his part, was keen to revolutionise the handloom sector and those who doubted his assertion in this regard were seeking to question his all-out revolutionary thrust and ingenuity. Even practical suggestions for changing the date had meant a big irritant to him at that time.

What would he think in retrospection now after the big mishap? It can be a safe conjecture that he would himself learn a few lessons from the discomfiture he brought upon himself and all concerned. His expectations about the number of participants in the convention too had gone awry. Assurances given to him by small hangers-on and little minions, including some 'mafia' coteries of inconsequence, to bring tens of thousands of handloom weavers from the northern States of UP and Bihar in particular, had turned out to be totally farcical. He should have understood well in advance that in these States the handloom weavers had had enough at the hands of the Textile Ministry and the Prime Minister (who had failed to respond to any of their real grievances during his tenure in office) inaugurating a handloom weavers' convention offered no incentive to them. What then was the attraction to the suffering weavers to attend the meet? Let our Textile Minister, a seasoned trade unionist in his own right, ponder over these points. He must have known beforehand that right from the first day of his entry into the Prime Minister's Office in 1991, he had been receiving weavers' delegations and memoranda from them, invoking his benevolence to provide succour to the poverty stricken weavers. He must have also taken note of the fact that his induction most unfortunately had synchronised with a fresh cycle of spurt in yarn prices, which had continued without interruption for a whole year, and the Prime Minister had failed to intervene even in a token manner. And the Textile Minister must realise that in contrast to Mrs Indira Gandhi Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's attitude towards the handloom weavers had been one of total apathy and unconcern, inhuman and unjust. No elaboration is necessary since all this is crystal-clear if one cares to study the approaches of the two Prime Ministers on this score.

It was thanks to the All-India Handloom Fabrics Marketing Society, with its sound rapport and nationwide ramification, that some weavers could be induced to come to the Delhi weavers' convention. Had it not been so, the convention would have been a failure in terms of numbers as well. Appreciating all the zeal and concern shown by the Textile Minister in organising the convention, one must draw his attention to the fact that perhaps this had been the first occasion where a Prime Minister had failed to make any policy announcement on any of the basic issues that had been raised by the organisers of a convention representing the most vulnerable segments of an industry which was on the verge of bankruptcy and ruin.

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NOT everyone had come to the convention for ad hoc relief and doles and charity (that too was not offered). Most of those, including veterans of long-drawn handloom weavers' struggles, had come in the fond hope of hearing from the Prime Minister what he proposed to do with regard to the vital issues plaguing the country's largest cottage industry feeding millions of mouths and weaving millions of metres of cloth, catering to the needs of the common man. They had come primarily to know about the new policy parameters for revamping the handloom cooperative sector. They had come to seek justice, social and economic, for the handloom sector in accordance with its overall production and employment potential. There were many such veterans from the Prime Minister and Textile Minister's own home State, with varying political affiliations, just to join the common endeavour for salvaging an industry which had lost none of its economic viability for the advance and health of our national economy. These veterans spoke in a common language at the convention and the demands they made from the government had the same spirit of commonality. Such stalwarts from Nalgonda, Warangal, Hyderabad and Guntur were also ditched by the Prime Minister.

It is difficult to analyse and outline the reasons behind the Textile Minister's failure to secure from the Prime Minister some positive policy announcements. If the convention was aimed at exerting pressure on the Prime Minister to help ameliorate the weavers' conditions, it turned out to be a damp squib. Pressure-building conventions, official or non-official, are a shade different.

All said and done, it would be unfair not to credit the Textile Minister with creating an awareness about the need to adopt steps to revolutionise the handloom sector. But that could be done by massive action, preceded by meaningful deliberations. One fondly hopes that the weaver-leaders, cutting across all political barriers, would unite to rouse weavers all over the country for such action in order to save handlooms from annihilation. ■

SUMIT and ELANGOVAN : Surajkund AICC

(Continued from page 6)

millions of people. The AICC decides to continue the war over povery which has been the objective of our economic policy. The people of India now realise that communal forces have tried to distort the vision of the people and the Congress of an economically powerful and united country.

Mehta was critical of the AICC resolut in endorsing the Finance Minister's speech in Parliament. "That is not the purpose of a political party," he averred. "What we want is not a market-friendly economy, it should be people-friendly. It should be for the poor. But instead of poor the word that has come to the fore is 'power'."

He was backed by Maharashtra's Shivajirao Patil (father of the late Smita Patil) who asserted that "growth without social justice will lead you nowhere", and lamented the lack of importance given to the cooperative sector in the resolution. Rather the private sector was being unduly played up.

The resolution gave a call: "Employment for All by 2000". There was criticism that this was an overambitious plan which could not be fulfilled. Commerce Minister Pranab Mukherjee pointed out that *Garibi Hatao* too was an ambitious slogan but "unless you aim high you cannot succeed". He reiterated that acceptance or non-acceptance of the Dunkel draft, there was no question of doing anything against the farmers' interests. He also reaffirmed that loans from the Fund-Bank were in our terms and no foreign agency could dictate the course of action. Brave words! Only that Finance Minister Manmohan Singh was not that forthright. Instead he referred to Rajiv Gandhi's vision that inspired his thinking, and how in 20 months India's economic reforms had achieved a miracle drawing kudos from all over the world.

As for N:D. Tiwari, who had moved the resolution, he was hard pressed to extoll the sacrifices of the handloom weavers in the freedom struggle and assure that their interests would not be sacrificed at the altar of the new economic policies. This, in response to criticisms voiced on this score—a fresh illustration of the fact that the plight of the toiling people still finds articulation in such sessions.

The political resolution was piloted by Sharad Pawar who used the opportunity to reveal that investigations into the Bombay blasts had established the hand of Pakistan's ISI behind those dastardly acts, adding that in the light of that evidence "Pakistan should now be declared a terrorist state". However, these utterrances were not supplemented by either Rajesh Pilot, the Internal Security Minister, nor the Prime Minister himself (which, of course, does not mean any difference of opinion; diplomatic reasons must have weighed against making such a statement on the part of the Central leaders).

Pawar's was a powerful speech demonstrating his importance in the Congress. He sharply castigated the BJP-RSS-Shiv Sena urging the cadres to fight the menace politically instead of banning the Sena and the BJP, and did not forget to assail Islamic fundamentalism in the same breath. At one point he also made the remark that as "Narasimha Rao's generation was dwindling" the time had come for "my generation, that is, those born in 1940 and thereafter, to come to the fore".

Arjun Singh's speech too was striking because of his cogent arguments and attack on the *Sangh Parivar* (even if there was no word of criticism of Islamic .fundamentalism). But more important was his personal explanation. "I have not wandered into the party," he declared and recalled how a meeting with Jawaharlal Nehru in his youth had exerted a lasting political influence on him. This was a reply to V.C. Shukla's motivated charges against him. As for the Prime Minister's call for "unity" and "discipline", he agreed to the necessity of those but added another term: "duty". The meaning was not lost on the assembly. But the manner of his delivery left an indelible impress on dispassionate observers.

Overall, the AICC session was a successful event in terms of reinforcing the organisational unity of the Congress, at least for the present. But it failed to chart out a comprehensive plan to check the growing fissiparous trends in the country especially at this juncture when, according to the Prime Minister's own admission, the nation had reached a "crossroad". Nor did it inspire confidence in the party's capability in fighting the communal danger. Beyond the usual rhetoric (although the Congress President's emphasis on people being the final arbiters of every issue was of considerable value) it failed to project a new horizon of resurgent secular nationalism as opposed to the *Sangh Parivar*'s "pseudo-Hinduism". Nor was there any call to other secular forces to join hands and fight the dark forces of religious sectarianism.

An opportunity lost? Or was it just a holding operation? ■

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EDITORIAL

Historic Judgment

Regardless of whether or not the apex court of the country revokes the verdict of the Jabalpur Bench of the Madhya Pradesh High Court quashing the Presidential Order of promulgation of Central rule in that State simultaneous with the dismissal of the BJP-run government there and dissolution of the State Assembly last December, the landmark judgment stands on its own merit and is of far-reaching significance. In fact both this judgment as well as the court stricture against Sharad Pawar, the Maharashtra Chief Minister, constitute an unmistakable note of warning to the executive against running roughshod in the discharge of official duties, and this the latter can ignore only at its peril. Thus they are of particular value from the standpoint of effective democratic functioning of our polity that demands close scrutiny of every step of the persons in authority so as to ensure accountability of the concerned personnel for their acts of omission and commission.

As has been correctly noted by analysts dissecting the Madhya Pradesh High Court's judgment, this is the first time that a Presidential proclamation has been held void after carrying out judicial anatomy of the executive measure, specifically whether the act conformed to Article 356 of the Constitution. This Article covers the "provisions in case of failure of constitutional machinery in States" and empowers the Centre to dismiss a State Government and impose President's Rule only in such an eventuality. However, as the experience of our post-independence history testifies, this constitutional provision has been invoked more in the breach and its arbitrary use has on several occasions invited protests and objections from wide and vocal sections of public opinion. But the Madhya Pradesh High Court verdict signifies the first judicial intervention in support of such public reactions as mentioned above. In that sense one cannot but characterise the judgment as historic.

In effect the verdict has unambiguously held that the Presidential measure did not spring from Article 356; hence it could not be interpreted as being in tune with the letter and spirit of the Constitution. Concretely speaking, the court has found no breakdown of law and order in the State that could justify application of Article 356. What is more galling for the Central authorities, the High Court has come across nothing in the Madhya Pradesh Governor's communication to the Centre (on the deteriorating law and order situation in Bhopal and two other cities) capable of being construed as the failure of the constitutional machinery in the State. Whereas in UP the Kalyan Singh Government can be legitimately held guilty of having violated the Constitution due to its inability, deliberate or otherwise, to preserve the structure of the Babri mosque it had solemnly promised to protect in its submission to the Supreme Court, such legitimacy is lacking in the Central move to place the Sunderlal Patwa Government of Madhya Pradesh, the Bhairon Singh Shekhawat Government of Rajasthan and the Shanta Kumar Government of Himachal Pradesh in the dock by arbitrarily invoking the provisions of Article 356—a point repeatedly brought into sharp focus in these columns as well as articles and commentaries appearing in this journal even while clearly dissociating from the politics of religious sectarianism resorted to by the largest Opposition party in the Lok Sabha that also happens to be the ruling party in those four States. Employment of such tactics by the party in question cannot possibly justify the Central action in at least Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh.

Basically the Central step was linked to the issue of enforcement of the ban on the RSS and the VHP. The hasty move on the part of the Central authorities came not after availing concrete evidence of the Madhya Pradesh Government's direct refusal to implement the ban, but only on the basis of apprehensions that the State Government would not enforce the measure. Thus, according to the High Court, there was no case of the State authorities having openly disobeyed the Central directive to that effect.

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In the light of such a verdict based on meticulous review of the executive action, the judgment merits to be acclaimed purely from the viewpoint of its contribution to the process of strengthening the democratic structure of governance we have chosen for ourselves. Petty political considerations (like the extent to which the BJP or the political formations associated with it—who together broadly comprise the *Sangh Parivar*—would be able to capitalise on the High Court judgment and draw mileage out of it) should not be permitted to blur one's objectivity. Large segments of democratic opinion in the country were appalled at the gross misuse of Article 356 by the Central action of dismissing the aforementioned BJP-run State Governments on December 15, 1992 (precisely because of the potentiality of such a move *inter alia* to add grist to the mill of the *Parivar's* nefarious sectarian propaganda). Their opposition to the action has now been upheld by the High Court judgment whose importance would not be eroded by the Supreme Court's subsequent verdict on the subject.

The Madhya Pradesh High Court's observations are bound to have some salutary effect, even if on a limited scale (especially in case the Supreme Court's perceptions on the issue are at variance with those of the High Court), on the future activities of the Centre against the State Governments. In the event of the Centre drawing adequate lessons from the landmark judgment and adopting the necessary corrective steps (and not suspending the elections to the State Assembly beyond June 15, 1993), those would go a long way towards reinforcement of the fabric of our federalism. It is this federalism which has been consistently weakened as a consequence of the Centre's exhibition of blatant political partisanship against the State Governments controlled by political formations other than the organisation in charge of the Union Government—an ominous development amplified by the Sarkaria Commission as one of the prime factors responsible for undermining Centre-State relations.

April 7 *S.C.*

Of Mice and Men...

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

Is it going to be a long hot summer after the blizzards of the Ayodhya of December and the Bombay of February and March? For the last four months all eyes were set on the trauma of communal violence, with the climax having reached on the bomb blasts of March 12. All this could no longer be contained as internal developments, as their international aspects cannot be wished away.

While communal polarisation has already been accentuated, some of the political calculations drawn from it do not fit in with the emerging realities. By conventional logic, the *Sangh Parivar*'s call for the establishment of *Hindutva* must suck up the overwhelming mass of the Hindus, the majority community in the country. And where the *Sangh Parivar* is not strong, the Congress may reap a part of the Hindu harvest because of its commitment to build the Ram temple.

All this does not seem to take into account a new trend—a turbulence as yet inadequately understood which may have far-reaching significance. In Bombay, where the Shiv Sena diktat has virtually become the law, and where the BJP still maintains its alliance with the Shiv Sena, one cannot be too sure of what may happen when the elections will come in Maharashtra. For there is revulsion within the Hindu community at what the Shiv Sena is doing. The Congress may not be able to cash in on that revulsion, but other forces may come up to give vent to it. This could be seen in areas as far apart as Uttar Pradesh and Tripura.

The trouncing of both the BJP and the Congress in the students' union elections in the five UP universities of Allahabad, Banaras, Lucknow, Aligarh and the Kumaon may turn out to be a watershed in the politics of the Hindi belt. There is likelihood of a tendency on the part of the Congress and the BJP to pooh-pooh these reverses as the sign of youthful impetuosity, but such conclusions would be a mistake on the part of the leaders of these parties, since it is the temper of the student community that is the traditional pace-setter of Uttar Pradesh politics.

What is important to note is that the BJP-led Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad lost in Allahabad, Banaras and the Kumaon to the Left-led All India Students' Association, while in Lucknow and Aligarh, victory has come to Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi Party and Kanshi Ram's Bahujan Samaj Party. One hears a supercilious alibi that in these students' union elections, caste appeal was rampant. For one thing, this can hardly explain the preference for radical Left candidates in a State where the Left has so far been able to make little dent in politics. Besides, appeal to caste loyalties has been part of the electioneering in the entire Hindi belt, and it would definitely be resorted to by these very parties in the event of general elections.

What the UP students' union elections indicate is the fast gathering aversion of the intelligentsia towards the corruption and irrelevance of the conventional political parties. If the BJP has so long been able to capitalise on the Ram temple issue to gain votes, this appeal seems to have started wearing out, particularly after its hideous face as shown on December 6 at Ayodhya. One has to understand that playing upon the Ram sentiment cannot smother the basic demands of the impoverished and the underprivileged, and any politically-motivated section of the youth and the student community cannot but side with the underdog. There is no granary for the poor in the vaults of the *Sangh Parivar*'s Ram temple, nor could the demolition of the Babri Masjid be passed off as storming the citadel of the rich. There is thus no royal road from the Ram temple at Ayodhya to capturing power in Delhi.

The question posed by the UP developments is formidable for the run-of-the-mill politician. When President's Rule was clamped down upon the State, the Congress circles were excited that they might be able to come back to power under cover of the Central raj. But after some time when it was found that the entrenched factions in the UP Congress could not bury their hatchets to come together, the BJP hopes were roused that it would be able to romp home to office with Kalyan Singh as the head of the martyred brigade. But

(Continued on page 35)

India and US in Changing World

J.N. DIXIT

The following are some of the remarks made by the author, India's Foreign Secretary, at a Conference on "India and the US after the Cold War" in New Delhi on March 8, 1993. —Editor

In talking about the theme of "Changing Regional and Global Environment" from an Indian perspective, I think it is inevitable to focus on the changes that have come about in Indo-US relations following the end of the Cold War. Events like the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, the unification of Germany, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the subsequent end of the Cold War set in motion of a chain-reaction which has altered the political architecture of relations between nations and forced almost every nation to undertake a fundamental reappraisal of its world view.

However, while the end of the Cold War has, indubitably, removed the ideological underpinnings of conflict between competing blocs of countries, it has not made the world free from conflict. The Gulf war, the continuing ethnic imbroglio in former Yugoslavia, the spectre of hunger and starvation in Somalia and protracted fighting in Angola, Afghanistan and Cambodia are grim reminders that the post-Cold War era is not without suffering and strife. Ideological rivalries have faded giving rise to antagonisms across traditional fault lines in human society. The forces of religious extremism, bigotry and sub-nationalism have also merged as potent challenges in the post-Cold War era.

On the economic side, the world trading system is in a process of painful transition with the forces of free trade in competition with increasing protectionism. The haves want more and the have-nots do not possess the capacity to bleed further.

Simultaneously, long deferred global problems, including environmental degradation, depletion of resources, transnational migration, narcotics trafficking and terrorism have demanded greater attention and require collective remedial action.

The fast changing global environment is, therefore, a bit disorienting. The world as a whole is today standing at a juncture, looking at conflicting sign-posts and holding outdated road maps.

But the picture is not completely negative. The end of the Cold War has also engendered a new spirit of cooperation among nations. The forces of freedom and democracy are in the ascendancy. Some major disarmament initiatives have been taken by the United States and Russia and there is an increasing reliance on collective security mechanisms to deal with threats to world peace.

The new spirit of coöperation in the post-Cold War era has also impacted on Indo-US relations. In 1979, Dr Henry Kissinger had alluded in his book *The White House Years* to what he called "the never never land of US-Indian relations". Today, the Carnegie Endowment's Report on Indo-US relations talks of "a growing partnership between the world's two largest democracies". The difference in perception is palpable.

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HOW does India see itself in the changing international environment and what are the implications of these changes for the future of Indo-US relations? These were the issues to which the Carnegie Study Group addressed itself and I would also like to address this subject.

I think that there are broadly two sets of issues which concern us in India today. First and foremost is the question of internal stability and national security and the options that India needs to exercise in maintaining internal stability and defend its territorial unity and integrity. The second set of issues revolves around our developmental aspirations, what we need to do to modernise our industry, our society, how can we speed up the process of socio-economic development and how successfully we can integrate the Indian economy with the global economy.

Let me commence with the second set of issues first. As the Carnegie Report mentions, with a per capita income of 260 dollars per year, India faces monumental economic development challenges. The overriding concern of the successive governments since independence has been to find ways and means to reduce poverty and improve the standards of living of our people, while at the same time seeking the goals of social and economic justice for our people. The system of checks and controls on the economy was considered necessary at one stage in order to protect our infant industries from foreign competition. We now feel that our industry has reached a stage where it can not only stand on its own but, given the vast reservoir of technically trained manpower and relatively lower cost of labour in India, compete in the world market. A major and bold programme of economic restructuring and liberalisation has, accordingly, been initiated by the government with the aim of integrating the Indian economy with that of the world. While potential investors from the US and other Western countries lose no time in criticising the shortcomings in the reform programme, I think very little thought is given to the sheer magnitude and complexity of embarking on a programme of this nature in a functioning democracy of more than 800 million people. Economic policy cannot be implemented through executive fiat, the will of the people and of Parliament has to be taken into account. For this reason, some may feel that the liberalisation programme is proceeding slowly, but at least there is a growing recognition that it is irreversible.

I hope our American friends have noted the contents of this year's Budget which has not only underlined the irreversible nature of the reform programme but has also sustained the momentum of this process by significantly reducing import duties and making the rupee fully convertible on the trade account. It is my firm belief that strengthened economic interaction has the brightest prospect of becoming the centrepiece of the emerging Indo-US relationship. The United States is India's largest trading partner and biggest foreign investor. Although investments from the United States during 1992 increased by more than 10 times over the 1991 figure, they still remain far below the potential.

The United States has strongly supported our economic liberalisation programme, but greater Indo-US cooperation in the economic field has been impeded on account of differences in perspective over some issues like intellectual property rights. I fully agree with the Carnegie Report's recommendation that

> taking into account the long term potential for mutually beneficial trade, India and the United States should look beyond short term trade disputes and begin to examine possible new types of trading arrangements that would further their respective interests at both the regional and multilateral levels.

I hope the US Department of Commerce takes note of this line of thinking!

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COMING to the first set of security related issues, I think all of us present here recognise the grave and extraordinary threat that India today faces to its unity and territorial integrity on account of externally aided terrorist violence in two of our border States, Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. The genesis of the problem of both these States is, indeed, internal. But the climate of fear and terror unleashed by militant groups getting direct support from across the border has made the search for a democratic and political solution extremely difficult.

Our search for such a solution has continued and it has succeeded in some measures in Punjab where a democratically elected government has been able to bring about a remarkable reduction in the level of terrorist violence. This is a clear example of the fact that in a democracy the grievances of the people can best be solved through democratic means and not by taking recourse to the gun.

The government would like to initiate a similar political process in Kashmir as well. Such a dialogue is necessarily predicated on achieving a degree of normalcy at the ground level. Nevertheless, political dialogue in Kashmir has begun even with those groups which continue to shoot at our security forces and indulge in other acts of violence. Those who feel that continued instability in Kashmir will ultimately compel the Indian Government to part with Kashmir are wrong. There is no question whatsoever of India making any territorial concessions in Kashmir. We are interested in a political solution which has to be within the framework of our Constitution and we are confident that sooner or later, such a solution will be found.

Let me also, at this juncture, talk about the issue of human rights. A deliberate and motivated attempt is being made to create an impression in Western countries that India does not care for human rights. Negative perceptions in this regard have been reinforced by reports of international human rights organisations such as Amnesty International.

I would like to reiterate that India is a democracy and basic human rights are enshrined in and protected by our Constitution. We have a free vigilant press, an independent judiciary and an alert Parliament to safeguard human rights. Our security forces are under instructions to use the minimum force. But, given the scale and sheer brutality of terrorist violence, some excesses by our security forces do occur occasionally in combatting such violence. Soldiers are, after all, trained to shoot at when shot at. All reported cases of human rights violations are dealt with firmly and the gulity are punished. At the same time, a democratically elected government is also mandated to act firmly against those who seek to subvert the rule of law and pursue an agenda through violence and terrorism. We will continue to seek solutions to our domestic problems within the framework of our Constitution and secular polity but there can be no compromise on India's unity and territorial integrity in this endeavour. At the same time we remain fully alive to human rights concerns.

A delegation from Amnesty International has held discussions with the government and representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross would also be visiting India shortly. We expect to introduce a bill to set up the National Human Rights Commission during the current session of Parliament. Our attitudes are changing. There is introspection and action to minimise human rights violations. There are enough internal reasons for us to move ahead. The regrettable incidents at Ayodhya have been condemned by nearly all political parties and would not be allowed to be repeated.

What needs to be realised is that there are limits to the use of human rights as a tool of diplomacy. Human rights cannot be viewed in isolation or as an absolute value. As a democracy we are sensitive to friendly criticism from sister democracies but beyond a point attempts to lean on us will be counter-productive. When it comes to India's unity and territorial integrity, human rights cannot take precedence over national security. Nor will we accept human rights conditionalities in our bilateral interaction.

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THE issue of national security is also at the core of our policy in respect of nuclear issues. I believe that the Carnegie Report has broken new ground in moving away from some of the fundamentalist dogmas which have cramped the further strengthening of Indo-US relations. The Cold War *mantras* cannot remain the guiding principles of our future bilateral interaction. The issue of non-proliferation has emerged as a difficult and complex problem because it involves fundamental national security perspectives. In my view, this issue provides both opportunities and challenges if countries concerned could move away from entrenched positions.' Happily, we have achieved a measure of success in concluding the Chemical Weapons Convention which will in time eliminate one class of weapons of mass destruction. Does the CWC provide a blue-print for eliminating other classes of weapons of mass destruction? I believe that it does and that the principles on the basis of which the CWC was concluded can provide the basis for a new international consensus for eliminating other classes of weapons of mass destruction.

However, if countries continue to oppose no first use, a comprehensive test ban, international verification to monitor stoppage of the production of fissile material, a halt to modernisation and production of new kinds of nuclear weapons, non-discriminatory internationaal verification of transfer of fissile material then this international consensus shall continue to elude us. I need not, at this point, reiterate our well-known position on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

While welcoming the building down of nuclear arsenals under the agreements between the United States and Russia, one has to ask the fundamental question whether this process will continue beyond the bench-marks agreed on the numbers of nuclear warheads. What will happen after this bench-mark is reached? Will this process continue even further? There are no indications that the other established nuclear weapons powers will join this process. If national security considerations of each country dictate the retention of nuclear weapons for contingencies and as insurance then not only will the consensus on eliminating all nuclear weapons recede but also provide a compelling logic for countries like ours to retain the nuclear option. The enthusiasm for piecemeal non-proliferation initiatives like the so-called five-nation proposal, cannot form the basis of any credible non-proliferation problem engendered by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the refusal of the UK, France, Israel and China to place their nuclear arsenal on the negotiating table. Moreover, China's growing nuclear and missile collaboration with Pakistan adds a worrying dimension to the proliferation issue.

In the prevailing security environment, attempts to equate India and Pakistan and the quest for an Indo-Pak non-proliferation regime will remain an illusion since India's immediate and long-term security concerns can never be met in an Indo-Pak paradigm. Short of two decades now, India continues to exercise restraint and refrains from manufacturing and deploying nuclear weapons. No government in India can ignore the national consensus on keeping the nuclear option open regardless of the repercussions of sustaining this policy. In fact, coercive diplomacy on the nuclear issue could, in my view, lead to disturbing this delicate consensus and lead to the eventual weaponisation of the nuclear option. After all, how do you explain and with what logic that some countries have a divine right to retain nuclear weapons but others do not?

(Continued on page 35)

In the Service of the Masses

K.R. NARAYANAN

The following article is based on the address by the author, the Vice-President of India, delivered at the convocation of the University of Roorkee (March 27, 1993).

Let me avail of the opportunity offered to me to look before and after and view the education scene in India as it has evolved during the last fifty years and is still evolving under the stress of new circumstances.

Education is a dynamic subject. While its fundamentals are eternal, it has to meet the challenges of changing times and the continuous expansion and the sudden explosions of knowledge in the world.

We in India have tried to move our educational system along a dynamic path of growth. Several high-level Commissions have studied and reported on the need for educational reforms. Presently we are implementing the objectives and guidelines adumbrated in the National Education Policy adopted in 1986, reviewed in 1990 and placed before Parliament last year. But the weight of the past does not seem to permit us to depart too much from colonial continuity, the reforms recommended could not always be carried out into practice, and the changes brought about could not be far-reaching enough.

In the meantime, the education sector has grown enormously in the range and depth of studies and in the sheer number of students accompanied by lack of funds and facilities. A deplorable feature is the absence of close integration between education and the economic and social needs of the country, and also a certain lack of balance between primary and higher education. Higher education has received greater attention, though even here there has been a dilution of standards mainly due to the enormous growth in the number of students.

However, what is remarkable is that the best educational institutions in India, like the University that I have the privilege of addressing today, are equal to the best in the world, and the best students of an ordinary university can vie with the topmost of any university abroad. That is a tribute to our intellectual traditions and cultural background.

The crucial lacuna in our educational system is our failure in meeting the targets set for primary education and in the sphere of adult literacy. Article 45 of the Constitution enjoins upon us that the state shall endeavour to provide free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of six and 14. In the Seventh Five Year Plan the date for universalisation of elementary education was set as 1990. But even today the proportion of students attending school in this age-group is only 48.72 per cent. Apart from this we are confronted with a situation where there is a large drop-out rate. This is a daunting educational problem rooted in economic, social and cultural factors. The problem of illiteracy is also enormous. Though we have made some substantial progress in reaching 58 per cent in general literacy, there are still about 340 million illiterates in our country.

Of late mass literacy campaigns have been launched to eliminate illiteracy altogether. I am proud to say that my State of Kerala has achieved 100 per cent literacy. So has some of the North-Eastern States. Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka States are forging ahead towards high levels of literacy. Students in fortunate and elite universities like this have the responsibility of participating in the campaign for total literacy. A massive social goal like this cannot be achieved by governmental action and traditional methods alone.

We are all acutely aware that literacy among women in India is one of the lowest in the world. It is true that Indian civilisation has always placed the woman on a high pedestal and idealised her charm and virtues. At the same time we have made her victim of male exploitation in actual practice. Many of the social problems of our country can be traced to illiteracy and ignorance among our women folk. Studies conducted in India and abroad have conclusively shown that education of women is at the foundation of social and even economic development in a society. Solution of such basic and colossal problems like population control, reduction of infantile mortality, improvement of family health, and indeed the general well-being of society and the very quality of living are dependent upon the education of women. For the sake of national development as well as social equity the educational system and the general public can no longer afford to neglect this crucial aspect.

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AT this University of Engineering I cannot refrain from saying a few words about education in science and technology. We live in an age when science and technology have come to dominate our lives. The problem today is not how to escape from modern technology, because there is no escape from it, but how to master it and put it to beneficial uses. We in India were fortunate to have as our first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, a man of vision with a sense of the importance of science. The Scientific Policy Resolution of 1958 drafted by Nehru himself, declared:

> It is an inherent obligation of a great country like India with its tradition of scholarship and original thinking and its great cultural heritage to participate fully in the search of science, which is probably mankind's greatest enterprise today.

The purpose of this participation was spelt out to be "to secure for the people of the country all the benefits that can accrue from the acquisition and application of scientific method". It is in pursuance of this Resolution that India embarked upon the pursuit of science for the benefit of the people and also as a high intellectual adventure.

It has been argued sometimes that for a country like India what is needed is not science as such but technology, appropriate technologies for development. I think it was Louis Pasteur who said that there was no science and technology, but only science and its applications. Another great scientist said that there were only applied science and science not as yet applied. Today perhaps the distinction between science and technology has vanished, and it is technological development that often gives rise to new scientific propositions.

In my opinion this modern dominance of technology should not result in neglect of the pursuit of basic sciences. The Nobel Prize winning scientist, Dr Abdus Salam, has said:

> So far as developing countries are concerned, by and large we have tended to neglect this area of Science (that is, basic sciences) assuming for some reason that we could live off the scientific results obtained by others. This has been unmitigated disaster in that it has deprived us of men and women who would know about the basics of their disciplines.

In our context it is only from the matrix of the knowledge of basic sciences that technologies will come out, and also spread in society the spirit and temper of science so much required for sane thinking in the realm of politics and economics. Therefore, we need a strong programme for teaching general sciences in our schools and colleges. And we need to go ahead with basic research in our universities and in the great laboratories under the CSIR system. It is necessary for us to try to climb the peaks of science while putting science and technology to the service of the masses.

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IT is in this spirit that we embarked upon the development of atomic, space and defence sciences right from the inception of our independent existence as a nation. The achievements of our scientists and technologists in these fields, with hardly any help from outside, are monuments to the excellence of Indian science. But they are also of direct benefit to the people today in terms of electricity, medical facilities, broadcasting, television, communications, remote sensing, and national security.

Now that we have reached an advanced stage of development, there are pressures working upon us to stop further progress along these hightech lines. I have heard a story that in the early days of British rule an East Bengali masterweaver presented to one of the high British officials an exquisite handwoven piece of cloth. The reward he got for this gift was an order to have his fingers cut off so that he would not make such beautiful cloth again to compete with the Manchester textile industry! I need not say that we cannot today allow the fingers of our great scientists chopped off.

I am not putting any unbalanced emphasis on theoretical sciences and high technology A developing country and a colossal rural society like that of ours need science and technology to solve our major social and economic problems, to remove poverty, disease and ignorance and to provide the basic necessities of life to our people. One of the first attempts in this direction on the part of independent India was in the programme of Community Development and National Extension Services in the 1950s. This involved certain thin dissemination of simple scientific techniques for rural development. A major and brilliantly successful attempt was the application of an integrated technological package in agriculture which produced the Green Revolution. We have innumerable technologies half developed

Spot Inspiration

Every language has a category of words called 'nonce words'—words which are created for a particular occasion. Suppose we called a dubious stock exchange transaction a 'Har-shady deal', that would be nonce word. Fashioning such words is one of the occupational amusements of humorists, especially writers of middles and third editorials.

The other day I came across a wholly unintended nonce word. A reporter intended to write 'momentous' and came out with 'memomentous'—which turns out to be a combination of 'memorable' and momentous'. These days such slips can't be blamed on the typesetter in the composing room, as copy for the press is now composed in the editorial room.

There was another kind of mistake, not a slip but one born of ignorance, made by an announcer of Delhi radio. At the beginning of a programme of Western music she said in carefully cultivated alien accents that a particular piece had been composed by a modern Western composer after hearing the 'Pakistani musician Ali Akbar Khan'.

Familiarity with Western music is commendable, but must it betray such an ignorance of our own?

H.Y.S.

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or fully developed but not applied on a larger scale lying in the CSIR laboratories. Our scientists ought to move into the area of application of their knowledge.

On a more simplified scale there is the necessity for scientific extension organised by the government, voluntary organisations and scientists themselves for bringing to bear upon various developmental programmes their knowledge and ingenuity. Dr Abdus Salam has advocated application of scientific methodology to developmental problems and held that research effort in order to be effective must be supplemented with extension services. I may quote again from Dr Abdus Salam:

> Scientists themselves must play a role in ensuring that extension services do exist and their research does not go waste. This is the additional cross which must be carried by applied scientists in a developing country.

I should add that it ought to be the effort of the government also in building up or causing to be built up scientific extension services to enhance the efficiency and productivity of the multifaceted developmental activities in which it is engaged particularly in the rural areas.

Research and development has a capital role to play in the advance of science and in the application of science and technology to industrial and agricultral development. While India's expenditure on S and T grew from Rs 20 crores in the First Five Year Plan to Rs 8245 crores in the Seventh Plan, its expenditure on R and D remains just about one per cent of the GNP. And this R and D expenditure has been primarily in the state sector. It is time, especially when a major liberalisation and privatisation process is taking place, for the private sector to take a major share in R and D and ensure that there occurs a doubling of the percentage in the near future. Indeed we need close interaction among laboratories, universities and private enterprises for ensuring significant improvements in production and productivity in the economy as a whole.

It is the application of science and technology that is responsible for the spectacular economic difference between the developed and developing countries. It is again science and technology that is behind the success of the Korean, Taiwanese and Chinese economic successes. Liberalisation and privatisation alone will not bring concrete results in economic production. It is science and technology that can do it. It is interesting to recall that China had followed the dictum that Deng Xiaoping put forward a few years ago, namely:

> Science and technology are the first factors in productivity.

Engineering is one of the crucial sciences in all development, particularly in modern development. It is engineers who give body and shape to the dreams and designs of entrepreneurs and administrators. They are the builders of our economic structure. Combined with social engineering, I am aware that the study of social sciences is an integral part of the curriculam in this University. Engineers can and do make a vital contribution to the building up of modern India. May I extend my warm congratulations to the students who have taken the degrees today and wish them every success in the careers and the services to the nation that await them. ■

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PAGE FROM HISTORY

Nationalism—Past, Present and Future

RAMANAND CHATTERJEE

The following editorial which appeared in Modern Review *was explored by the veteran journalist, J.P. Chaturvedi, for the benefit of* Mainstream *readers. Chaturvedi writes:*

"The following editorial of the January 1910 issue of the celebrated Modern Review *(Calcutta) was written by the ardent nationalist and topmost missionary Editor of India, Ramanand Chatterjee, in December 1909, when communal electorates had became part of the Morley-Minto reforms. Ramanand Chatterjee became the President of the Surat conference of the All India Hindu Mahasabha. No one did better to acquiant Indian culture not only to the whole of India, but all over the world through* Pravasi, Modern Review *and* Vishal Bharat. *His views on the respective merits of nationalism as envisaged in Maharashtra and Punjab, and as opposed to that of Bengal are topical even today as they have again surfaced now. The great nationalist philosopher, Aurobindo Ghosh, held similar views when he wrote: 'Shivaji haa the darshan of only Maharashtra Mata, Bankimchandra had the darshan of only Banga Mata. It was in 1905, in the* swadeshi *movement against the partition of Bengal that we had the darshan of Bharat Mata.' "*

The editorial is being reproduced from Ramanad Chatterjee Memorial Volume *(1974), pp. 70-74. Emphasis has been added.*

—Editor

The opening of a New Civil Year brings with it an irresistible association of account taking. We look to see where we stand. Especially do we look to see where nationalism stands, at the beginning of this, its sixth year of recognised and organised life. Events good and bad have crowded themselves into the year that is past. The deportees are still launguishing in prison, still without trial, still being prayed for by friends and families who try to hush all mention of their names, lest agitation should react badly on the devoted heads of husbands and fathers. And the Government is still under the fond impression that in Aświni Kumar Dutt, Krishna Kumar Mitra, and their like, it has laid by the heels profoundly dangerous persons! This grotesque error would have made us smile, if its results had not first filled our hearts with such grim bitterness, that till we look again on their honest faces and hear once more the sound of their voice, smiles will be impossible in the world of Indian politics.

Nationalism, however, it is well to remember, is not politics. Politics is a matter of practical and momentary issues. It is concerned with public affairs, and with the voices and opinions of rulers and ruled. Politics is a field of strategy, it is a game; it is a struggle of views and interests, in which now one side wins and then the other; in which there is a constant ebb and flow of victory or defeat, in which the master-motive is the practicable and the expedient. Nationalism, on the other hand, is a religion. It is an ideal, a burning faith and, as such, it reeks neither of failure nor success. "The blood of martyrs," says an English proverb, "is the seed of the Church." And so with Nationalism. The fall of a man here, instead of depleting the cause, draws in new adherents. Men feel that they have found, at last, that thing to which they can give a life. The soul is at bottom a moth. It longs far more for the flame into which it may throw itself, than for the restrained and modest pleasure of a comfortable living. Even very ordinary persons are capable of rushing upon death for a cause, with infinite joy. The fever of battle is not felt by the great alone. The real masters of the world are those who see this thirst for self-sacrifice in man and make scope for it. An English social thinker pointed out recently the immense social evolution that may be traced in the single institution of human sacrifice. The 'dread rite', he says, has never been known to occur amongst any people who did not combine in their social formation a race of conquered and a race of conquerors. But it begins with the offering to the gods by the conquerors, of one of the servile people, and it ends, in a remotely higher stage of civilisation, with the offering, by the conquerors, of one of themselves. Even politics end, then, in self-immolation! But we being already evolved to this extent, nationalism is undoubtedly the central inspiration of India to-day, because it comes to us [illegible] the form and features of that Re [illegible] which has been the passion of our race for thousands of years.

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RENUNCIATION is in itself salvation, according to Indian thinking. No need to offer us heaven by way of mithai, sweetmeat or reward! To forget self is Heaven. To be lost in the larger life is the ultimate goal. Life and death, duty and supreme sacrifice—all these are only the forms under which Freedom manifests itself; Freedom itself is above them all, it is the life beyond self. This freedom today is offered under the name of Nationalism in a way in which all can share in it. The life of a monk or avatar was possible only to one man amongst millions but the age of the Many has dawned. Nationality calls on the millions to be heroes.

In this cause, there can be neither high nor low; *neither Hindu nor Mohammedan:* neither great nor little. There can be only national and un-unational. *The great defect in all our earlier waves of nationality lay in this fact, that they were local and partisan. They always tended to open old wounds, to revive old feuds. This is the weakness of all love, when it is not sufficiently transfused by thought. The emphasis laid on affection, brings prejudices also into high relief. Even Bankim Chandra Chatterji could go no further than this. The same has been the weakness of all movements in Maharashtra and the Punjab. The revival of an ancient glory is also the revival of an ancient enmity. It was for this reason that the real impulse of the future could only be born in Bengal,—in Bengal with her great heart and constructive imagination. Nationalism, it must be understood, is a Gospel, and it includes every section of the Motherland. We are Hindus, but we do not even want a Hindu India, any more than we want a Mohammedan India. We want an Indian India. Hindus themselves would lose by a Hindu India, more than they could possibly imagine themselves to gain. Mohammedans would lose equally by a Mussalman India. In the India of the future, both these have to play their part. The fire has to be lighted on the common hearth. It is the life of a great mutual commonwealth, not that of any single section, that will be created; the good of the whole that will be enthroned.*

At the present stage of our existence, some of us may fret, that it is not given to us to do more than dream. Let no such despair move us. The universe is the expression of ideas. Thought governs all things. All that is, is the fruit of dreams. All causes have their effects, and an idea is a cause. Let us elaborate the idea, work for the idea, give utterance to the idea. As the arrow finds its own way to the mark, so will this idea change the face of the visible world.

From the Punjab and the North-West comes the news of the progress of the very ugly political movement, by which Hindus and Mohammedans are being set at variance with one another. Nationalism, it appears, is not a word of which the Mussalmans of those parts care to take much account. And the bitterness of one side is not without its echo on the other. Who has engineered this movement, it is needless to say, needless even to ask. It is enough, that they may for the moment congratulate themselves on perfect success. The higher education of Mussalmans also has been made productive of a further crop of the same sort. Bitterness and sectarianism and a short-sighted narrowness are, it is expected, to be brought forth constantly, so long as the summer and winter fail not and so long as the sun and the moon endure. Can it be that men, daring to call themselves men, can permit themselves to think and scheme in this way? *Deliberately to sow strife between brother and brother of the same household, for the destruction of both; deliberately to set fire on the threshold that the doors of the home may be burnt down and the seat of Lakshmi become a smouldering ruin whence came the souls that can delight in such deeds? Of what kind are they? Was it of such things as this that the Hebrew masters of denunciation spoke, when it was declared "they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind"? We are constantly asked, however, how is this to be counteracted? Is there any hope for Nationalism, unless Hindus and Mussalmans cooperate? What is to be done? What hope is there for us?*

In the first place, we are in the hands of God, not on our own shoulders is the responsibility of the future. This is but to take the next step forward in the dark, holding hands, and joyfully singing the while. The Power that to-day display itself as absolute defeat will tomorrow have turned that very defeat into victory. Where our weakness appears, there, in the workings of destiny, shall our strength shine forth. Let none be sure, therefore, that in seeking to rouse a premature political strife, they have not actually prepared the ground for a deep and abiding union, between the Hindu and the Mohammedan, in the service of the common nationality. People are only too apt to fall themselves into the snare they dig for others. This is a very ancient trick of fate.

Secondly, is there any hope for Nationalism, in the event of a misunderstanding between Hindu and Mussalman? Of course there is! We should like to work together. There is no question as to the greater strength of the rope that is made of double strands but this is a moral strength and clearness, only. In face of the immense numerical preponderance enjoyed by one of the parties, it would be quite clear, even if the history of the past had not already elucidated it, that mutual cooperation of the two great sections of the Indian nation is only an advantage, not a necessity to nationalism. Hindus are no way inferior in prowess. The bravest race in India is Hindu, not Mohammedan. We have the advantage in education. It is for the sake of Mohammedans themselves that we desire that nationality should be a common cause; not for nationality, which cannot ultimately lose, whoever opposes it.

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THE geographical position of Bengal makes it inevitable that the solution of the problem of our mutual relationship should be arrived at here.

"As long as Afghanistan towers upon the frontiers of the Punjab," exclaimed an excitable Arya Samaji once to us, "Hindu and Mussalman must be at variance there!" And certainly religious developments make it very difficult for Punjabis, until they have mastered new areas in education, to realise a nationalism that includes two religions, without in any way weakening the religious force of either. In the North West Provinces the sharpness of the contrast may die down; but it was naturally in Bengal that the secret was found.

What is to be done? Go on realising the idea, of course! Strugging for its realisation in every way that opens up to us! Go on trying to conceive of nationality, trying to imagine a perfect civic life, and striving to work out what we have imagined. Go on deepening our own education, struggling for new means of lifting and widening it. Go on adding to our literature, aiding in the instruction of the people, extending industry, tightening the boycott, strengthening ourselves in every possible way, stamping out jute, increasing rice, adding to wealth, gathering public opinion, making it articulate, learning all we can of India and chastening and informing our own love of her. This is an immense programme. It leaves little room for hopelessness. It is summed up in one word as Nation-building.

But our hope cannot be dimmed, for it is fixed in truth. *The world is so fond of sectarian names that we forget that there is really no such thing as a Hindu or a Mussalman. There are, really, only men who call themselves by those names.* All humanity is the prey of Truth. The right, the noble, and the high is the only propaganda, and all men are open to it. Let us only realise it clearly enough, and the world must be converted. We would fain realise Nationality in such a fashion that even they who fight against it, must witness, perforce, to the truth of it. Nay, do they not do so already? And the Mohammedan, who is as much the child of his mother as the Hindu, can he fight against her for ever? Or can the wells of knowledge be for ever poisoned? Woe be to the man who depends upon the making and telling of a lie, for verily his kindgom shall not endure! The cause that is based upon the common home, the common interest, the common love, shall not lose one of its children, in the end. Ten years hence Nationalism will count its missionaries, its apostles and its martyrs, as much amongst Mohammedans as amongst Hindus. Nothing that has a soul can for ever resist God! ■

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Ayodhya: Final Collapse of Administrative Structure

B.D. SHARMA

I

A State of Utter Confusion

In Ayodhya the Magistrate of the District (DM) was watching, his Superintendent of Police was present with thousands of policemen at his command, a large contingent of para-military and even armed forces were standing by. And the Babri Masjid was being dismantled, brick by brick, ostensibly by 'miscreants', but really as per a meticulous plan with perfect precision. A frenzied crowd of a lakh and more had been collected from all over the country. Party stalwarts were deliberating on the side.. They were waiting for the final signal of the job accomplished. And only wanted signals could be allowed from the arena while the operation was on; media persons were beaten up and hounded out.

And chaos spread to other parts of the country as news reached and the *kar sevaks* returned. Loot, arson, rape, killing ensued, in some cases unprecedented after-partition holocaust. Before a semblance of order was restored, the *darshan* issue has been allowed to grip Ayodhya and the nation. Ayodhya continues to be tense. Yet local administration 'allowed' symbolic *darshan* even as the High Court refused to oblige and reserved its verdict. The Prime Minister assured the nation that *darshan* was a matter for the local administration to settle. Some others reacted sharply—it was legitimisation of demolition. And '*namaz* can also be allowed' is the reported verdict of the Home Minister. *Namazies* march and are lathi-charged, High Court allows *darshan* but from a 'safe distance'—all new terms and new concepts in the name of maintenance of order. A first rate crisis is again allowed to be manipulated, where no one knows who is responsible for what. A state of utter confusion prevails nationwide.

The last scene of the drama *'Masjid-todo'* began with the announcement of *kar seva*. The entire nation was ill-at-ease, anything could have happened. Thousands of *kar sevaks* started pouring in from all sides. They had been told in no unclear terms that that was to be the Hindu's final bid for erasing the symbol of 'national shame' and building a temple on that sacred spot. On the face of it, the challenge was acknowledged to be grave; which needed prompt and effective action. Accordingly, all authorities under the Constitution concerned with the management of the system got feverishly busy. The nation was informed that the Union Government had started a round-the-clock vigil. Parliament debated with unusual gusto. Central forces were alerted and despatched. The highest court of the country agreed to hear and intervene. Symbolic *kar seva* (though no one knew its precise scope) was authorised. An independent observer was posted to 'watch' and report. The State Government solemnly pledged to protect the Masjid with all its might.

And in this melee of 'deliberations', 'debates' and 'decisions' by gentlemen-all, a vital issue of the moment was missed. 'What would happen if some promise failed or if someone turned out to be not-so-good a gentleman? Could anyone guide and control that frenzied crowd in the event of its sacred task remaining unaccomplished and the zealot's aspirations frustrated? In any case, the engineered storm, acquiesced by the administration, was allowed to gather. And the inevitable happened. The only person who had the duty and also the authority not to allow the very 'gathering of storm', the DM did not use that discretion. He was perhaps perplexed in the confused situation created by signals from all sides—irrelevant and uncalled for notwithstanding. And after the storm had gathered, it was too late for him to act—his decision could not be effective, he became a prisoner of his own indecision.

Dr Sharma, presently the Chairman of Bharat Jan Andolan, *is a Bastar based activist of* Nate Raj Andolan *(Our Village, Our Rule).*

The only rational decision for the DM after the announcement of *kar seva* with a clear objective, or even if he had that information through other sources, was not to allow the gathering of people for *kar seva*. He could have banned well in time the entry of *kar sevaks* in Faizabad district, ordered the police to seal the borders and prevent their entry. And if the police was not adequate or effective, he could have sought the aid of the army for the enforcement of his orders. All these measures, a firm and unwavering line of administrative action for maintenance of order, are within the realm of discretion of a DM. His discretion is absolute which no one—the government and the honourable courts included—could have questioned, varied or tampered with. However, the same DM has no authority whatsoever to allow or permit anything, such as *darshan* of Ram Lalla or *namaz*, as is the impression given even by official statements and also press reports. The DM has powers only to order persons to refrain from doing anything which, in his opinion, is likely to disturb peace, such as the gathering of people at some place or their entry in an area.

In the specific case, independent action of the DM to that effect—ordering *kar sevaks* not to enter Faizabad—could not have been relished by the big bosses and conspirators. But if that was how the DM felt, he was duty bound to do so. And that action of his would have served the purpose. Everyone else then could have deliberated and debated on issues political, religious, *et al.* endlessly, with the most vital issue of the moment—*kar seva*—out of their reach, being effectively protected by the discretion of the DM. No directions could have been issued to the DM in that regard—even an allusion about possible action by the higher authorities was out of place; it could have attracted contempt of court proceedings. Such an 'inconsiderate' DM could have been given marching orders. But even then the basic objective would have been served. That order would have brought to the fore, in a formal and unambiguous manner, the central issue—'the need for preventive action to avert the possibility of peace being disturbed'.

No successor could afford to take the risk of tampering with such an order. The focus of controversy, thus, would have shifted from 'the tussel over the Masjid' to the DM's action in his discretion to counter the likely threat to peace due to the remote possibility of irresponsible behaviour of the crowd or a section thereof after it had gathered near the Masjid, a discretion which is absolute and unchallengeable under the law. This simple decision was not taken then. And now one finds on the *darshan* issue, prohibitory orders have been relaxed and clamped even as the law and order situation in the whole country continues to be precarious, perhaps under the shadow of invisible sources, outside the pale of public accountability on this point. Consequently chaotic situation prevails.

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THE most ridiculous aspect of this confusion is that all those whose actions are not quite relevant, or who are not really equipped for doing so are acting, creating an impression that great things are being done, while the authority which should have exercised discretion and acted has not acted, or has been acting apparently under influence of other centres of power—above or on the side. Situations of public order are so complex that they cannot be presented really in precise and formal terms. Some vital points are bound to remain implicit, unstated and even unnoticed; and have to be imaginatively perceived and dealt with in good faith using discretion. That is the rationale behind discretionary powers being vested in the local authorities, for it is they who are steeped in the local milieu and know the situation best. Use of discretion based on this totality of perceptions and interactions has to be honoured.

But there is little appreciation of this practical wisdom, as an integral part of any administrative system, particularly by those who are formally at levels 'higher' (a wrong perception as many roles such as maintenance of order have to be beyond the frame of structured hierarchy). Consequently the 'higher ups' are prone to take decisions on the basis of ''communicated reality' and force them on the local authorities, without even realising that the reality may be entirely different. What purpose could the posting of an observer by the honourable Supreme Court serve when the observer could at best have a partial and superficial glimpse and the Court must necessarily depend on what is placed on record before it, and nothing else, which by its very nature is bound to miss the quintessence of the complex issue of public order? All despatches and directions in such a case cannot but add to the confusion and paralyse the local administration. And that is what we are witnessing at the moment in our country. This paralysis—non-action by the local administration and their servile compliance and obeisance to irrelevant dictates, advice and even allusions of all sorts of higher ups—has now been accepted as normal. So much so that even in the serious debate about the current crisis, this aspect of the lapse has not even been referred to and totally missed. This behaviour is no longer a lapse, but a normal feature of the present-day administration.

Ayodhya is not an isolated or unique case of this non-performance and distortion of roles. Recently in Bhopal, prohibitory orders had not been issued by the DM even as large-scale arson was taking place. In Jagdalpur, a hideous parade in the main streets of the town was on for two hours without any reaction whatsoever by the local administration. Instructions are awaited from quarters which have no *locus standi*, whose intervention should really attract penal action rather than obeisance. And the final scene in this array of 'actions by irrelevants' and 'non-action by the relevant'—the dismantling of the Masjid—cannot but symbolise the final collapse of India's administrative structure. This stucture was erected by the British for perpetuating their imperial regime. The political executive has usurped the autonomy of local administration, albeit limited but vital, without acknowledging the same. This has created a dangerous situation. We are having a frame which has no substance, a burnt out structure retaining merely its outer form. We have the phantom of administration—unreal and undependable. This ambivalent situation must end forthwith for restoration of order in the country.

II

The Search for an Alternative

It may be difficult, nay impossible, to put the clock back and to recreate the milieu in which the local administration can use authority and discretion as per the spirit of that schema. It has not only run down but, what is worse, it has become rudderless with careerism engulfing even the top services. Some honourable exceptions may still assert their authority and use their discretion. But a general reverberating response to the current challenge—civil servants as a class rising to the occasion—will be a miracle. The ploy of bowing to the 'Rules of Business' by the IAS Association in Uttar Pradesh, when some of its members are faced with a Supreme Court notice, is the worst possible commentary on the self-perception of the service and the system. A civil servant owes allegiance to the Constitution. Accordingly, he is duty bound not to act even when required to do so under a law which goes against the spirit of Constitution, not to speak of mere 'Rules of Business' which do not have the standing of even a law enacted by the legislature. That could be the only rationale for the near total immunity to the services against arbitrary action provided in the Constitution. Why should the nation carry the heavy burden of such a service, which cannot afford even to orally resist the political executive in areas of their exclusive concern and clearly beyond the legitimate beat of the politician? If there was a conspiracy to demolish the Masjid, the administration owes an explanation to the nation for its failure to act, simply because the conspirators happened to be the collaborators of the ruling elite.

It is perhaps too late to expect the administration to recapture the tradition of independent action. Moreover, in the midst of the unabashed struggle for power and drumbeats of development, officials are today totally confused about their constitutional, legal, formal and individual roles. Ministerial orders have acquired the aura of inviolable authority and vested interests are firmly in control of the sinews of power. Accordingly, the Commissioner of a Division, who formally represents the State at that level, has no hesitation in telling even the tribal people who seek his protection of their constitutional rights, to go to the court of law. The Magistrate of a District, in his capacity as the Collector, has no qualms in using force against the people fighting to protect their habitat, which sustains their life against intruders, in defence of the most fundamental of all rights, their right to life with dignity, simply because the government is committed to development or the political executive has decided to grant a *jagir* to some industrial house, unmindful of his constitutional responsibility to those people. Will the glaring failure of a DM—which has shaken the nation—shake some mandarins from their slumber and prompt them to assert their roles at least during the current phase of national crisis, as the nation searches for a viable alternative?

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WHAT are the possible choices before us? So far as maintenance of order is concerned, even the otherwise highly centralised colonial structure, which we have retained after independence, had necessary resilience built into it, through provision of discretion at appropriate levels. That element now stands eroded by political interference and what we have is a non-resilient centralised structure *par excellence*, but highly susceptible to external pressures. A centralised system by its very nature is incapable of realistically responding to distant local situations. Any stock-taking by remote authorities is bound to be highly circumscribed and also greatly distorted because of communication gaps and proneness to extraneous influences and considerations. Such a structure inevitably ends up, through the vicious path of indecisions, ambivalence, blunders and erratic flamboyant decisions, in a totally authoritarian regime. We cannot, therefore, afford to continue with the present hyper- yet pseudo-centralised system. With the Ayodhya tragedy, in any case, it has lost its lingering legitimacy and relevance.

The complex, delicate and vital task of maintenance of order, on whose sound foundation alone can anything else be built, must be handled by people who have a stake in it, who are directly involved, who are fully aware of all facets of the situation and who are personally accountable for lapses, if any. In the instant case of Ayodhya, the continuing confusion and muddle would not have been there if the responsibility of maintaining order had rested unequivocally with local institutions, like *janapada*, directly answerable to the people. The chances for informed, considered and mature handling would have been much brighter and the catastrophe could have been avoided. Maintaining order must devolve on the people's institutions.

The civil service, therefore, should be placed unequivocally under local self-governing institutions like *janapada, gaon sabhas*—which will be responsible for maintenance of order and peace in their respective areas. Further, the civil police in its present form should be disbanded and redeployed as local area police like the County Police of the UK. In fact, a centralised civil police goes against the very grain of democracy. In the current state of our nation, however, questions like protection of and justice to weaker sections of the community, minorities, *et al.* can be raised since we have a highly structured and inequitous social and economic order. Nevertheless, the post-independence experience clearly shows that our centralised structure has not only miserably failed to accomplish even this limited task notwithstanding fervent use of that ploy *ad nauseam* for centralisation of authority. On the contrary, centralisation has been counter-productive and led to consolidation of vested interests which were in the defensive on the eve of independence. The near absolute authority has been used to silence even the voice of dissent, let alone protection of people's rights. Today the real strength of the rural elite rests in its *nexus* with the powerful establishment. It is also through this channel that irresponsible, intolerant and insolent urban behaviour patterns are poisoning and dividing the small community rooted in the tradition of tolerence.

The dynamics and power equations even in small rural communities have changed with the spread of education, liberal ideas, rise of expectations through politicisation, etc. with all their limitations and distortions. Accordingly equity will have a better chance if that nefarious nexus between the local power elite and the establishment is snapped. Moreover, once the state divests itself of ordinary management functions, it can concentrate on vital and sensitive points. The state could continue to have, if at all, as a matter of abundant caution, some residual responsibilities for protection of vulnerable sections during the transitional phase which can be discharged through the state armed police. The deployment of these forces even now, in any case, is virtually a normal practice for dealing with even not-so-serious situations.

Once the people have a decisive role, the behaviour of the power elite will change. So far they have been operating from behind the scene, holding others responsible for their own misdeeds. Once they have to function in the open, accountability and a sense of responsibility will follow. In this milieu community dynamics, as distinct from intra-community alignments, will take over in the spirit of the great tradition of tolerance, harmony and brotherehood. This will mark the beginning of a real democratic polity, a process which was sadly reversed quite early in the post-independence confusion about values, norms and national objectives.

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WHILE a serious national dialogue must start forthwith on these issues, the urgent task is to prevent the muddle of Ayodhya from spilling over to other sensitive spots including Banaras and Mathura. This will become imminent, if we fail to learn from the big blunder. The first important lesson in this regard is that communal forces and their political outfits cannot be trusted, whatever may be the form and the content of their promises. Distortion of deeds and falsification of words, even sacred at that, have been the most powerful weapons of the fascist forces. That we cannot afford this luxury is now abundantly clear. We must act and act decisively here and now.

There are three aspects of the big blunder. The most regrettable fact of Ayodhya and events before and after, was the near total lack of initiative by the secular forces. While the conspirators were merrily chiselling their strategy and perfecting their plan for the final assault, everyone else in the nation was looking towards the state helplessly for initiative and action. There was no worthwhile community initiative even at the local level as it was deemed to be non-relevant in any case. The non-action at the national and the local levels proved to be disastrous. And there was utter confusion about roles and responsibilities at all levels in the constitutional formations. In particular, the local administration failed to discharge even what were otherwise its normal functions.

The need of the hour in this context is action by all actors. The secular forces must close their ranks and take the initiative for keeping continued vigilance on all sensitive spots particularly Banaras and Mathura. The people of Banaras and Mathura in their turn should assume the responsibility of maintaining order and not allow any untoward incident in the holy towns. The local administration should welcome this initiative and extend unreserved support to it. The officers should rise to the occasion and play the roles expected of them under the law of the land. It is only through such determined action can the unprecedented crisis and challenge which our nation is facing today be met effectively. It will pave the way for creating a people-oriented non-centralised administrative frame consistent with the basic tenets of an egalitarian democratic social order. ■

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Ayodhya Kand: Rapid Appraisal from Meerut Hinterland

P.N. MUKHERJI and B.B. SAHOO

On February 11 Goran Djurfeldt, the well-known Swedish sociologist, J.K. Pundir, a senior sociologist at Meerut University, Bhupati Sahoo and myself spent a whole day in the hinterland of the communally tense city of Meerut, doing a rapid rural appraisal in the aftermath of the Babri Masjid demolition at Ayodhya. We could find just enough time to do two group interviews in the two multi-caste, multi-community villages comprising predominantly upper castes, Scheduled Castes (mostly Chamars) and Muslims (mainly Julahas). The first interview was with a group of Muslim Julahas, about ten in number; the second, in another neighbouring village, with a much larger group of about 50 belonging mainly to the Rajput (Thakur) and other upper castes. These groups consisted of the young (aged 25 and around), as well as the older (35 and above). The experience was highly sensitising.

The Julahas

Initially apprehensive and guarded, they opened up gradually as they assessed that the visitors meant no harm. But that they couldn't or wouldn't open up wholly, was anybody's guess. Answers were direct or in innuendos, and sometimes one was left to read in between the lines. The Julahas in this and in the surrounding villages have been traditionally engaged in weaving and spinning. Powerlooms have severely affected the traditional household loom sector. The few with entrepreneurial zeal who could afford, shifted from hand to powerloom and from village to the town (Meerut). The town with less frequent interruptions in power supply was conducive to much greater output. Those who couldn't, either hovered precariously around the margin of subsistence sticking to the traditional technology, or chose to wander into fruit or vegetable vending and other such petty self-employments.

Our group consisted of one such entrepreneur family which had to return to the village. They had set up a small production unit in rented premises in Meerut. During the period of prohibitory orders, the landlord announced the theft of all the machines even when there was no looting or rioting. A clever ruse to rob them of their property. Thereafter they had had to invest in another four machines which have been installed in the meagre space at home in the village. Infrequent power supply, reduced production, increased cost of production leave them with a grossly reduced margin of profit. The others in the group were even more economically deprived.

There was general unanimity that the daily bread-winner was totally against communal disturbances; and hence against the conditions which give rise to them. On the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy they expressed a powerful, albeit simplistic rationalisation through the saying: *jiska lathi uska bhains* (one who owns the stick, to him the buffalo belongs). For them, "might has always been right"; so there was no need to fuss about Ayodhya. There was no tone of rancour in the statement, it was an articulation of an internalised belief, which they had come to accept as a historically invariant experience. The implication of the statement was clear: when the Muslims had their way they constructed the mosque; with power in the hands of the Hindus now the temple is being sought to be constructed. Of course, they felt hurt when the Masjid was destroyed. If one grieves over the death of a pet dog, wasn't it natural to feel remorse at such an occurrence! Questions of legality, constitutionality, democratic norms and all the sophisticated arguments that go with these, did not seem to be central to their discourse.

This attitude was reflected in their flexible responses to the following question put to them: now after what had already happened, what do they think can or should be done? They were

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reminded of the four general responses to the problem aired through media discussions: (1) since a mosque was demolished, a mosque should be reconstructed; (2) since a temple is purported to have existed prior to the mosque, now that the mosque no longer existed, the orginal temple should be reconstructed; (3) neither a mosque nor a temple, something else where all communities could interact and benefit in harmony—be it a hospital or a recreation centre—should come about; (4) both a mosque and a Mandir could coexist in harmony.

The first suggestion came in favour of a mosque from a young member of the group. This was followed by the view that if a Mandir came up, this will set at rest all communal tensions once and for all. While this view met with nodding approval, the next two suggestions were emphatically endorsed. Let there be neither a temple nor a mosque, but a place of common interest and benefit for all communities. A temple and a mosque standing side by side, they seemed convinced, would only lay the foundations for permanent tensions and animosities between the two communities.

That peace prevailed between the two communities in this area was evident. However, an undercurrent of tension between the upper caste Thakurs and Muslim Julahas was discernible. As chance would have it, a marriage was taking place in a Thakur family, and the bridegroom, erect on horseback, happened to pass by. On being asked whether they were invited to this marriage, the answers were evasive and sarcastic. Coincidentally, a little later, the body of a deceased Chamar caste woman was taken in procession through the same path, but moving in the opposite direction, out of the village, with loud incantations of *Ram naam satya hai*. With remarkable spontaneity, the group joined the funeral procession, some muttering the name of Ram in unison with others. The good neighbourly relations between the Chamars and Julahas become self-evident.

We found out that the group was exposed to the news media. They had kept track of events taking place in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the UK in the wake of the Babri Masjid controversy and its subsequent demolition. They strongly disapproved of attacks on temples in these places. They also noted with appreciation that the two *pirs* (small places of religious worship erected over buried Muslim saints) which were damaged in the neighbouring region, were promptly repaired by the Hindus.

A young college-going Brahmin passerby offered a passing remark that like the Mandal phenomenon, the Ayodhya agitation too will cool down.

Thakurs and Upper Castes

This time we parked ourselves outside the Panchayat Ghar of a neighbouring village. In no time we were surrounded by a jostling group of about fifty persons, all upper caste, predominantly Rajputs. Opinions gushed out assertively: A Ram temple should be constructed at the disputed site. Why should the Muslims object? After all, no *namaz* was being offered there. But for the Hindus it is a place of supreme religious siginficance. Any other alternative was not acceptable. Many of them had offered *kar seva* and carried a brick with them for construction. They had also generously donated money and were prepared for greater sacrifices, even their lives, for the cause, if need be.

They were hyper-critical about the Muslims in India, alleging that they were disloyal to the country. You had only to watch how vociferously they cheer up Pakistan in the cricket Test-matches against India. They are multiplying faster than Hindus by not accepting family planning measures. They have been destroying temples in hundreds in Pakistan and Bangladesh, as well as in the UK and India. Just as they have their Mecca and Medina, we too have our Ayodhya, Vishwanath and Mathura. Why can't they have the same respectful consideration for these places as the Hindus have for theirs? And so it went.

When their attention was drawn to some of the specificities of the dispute they conceded that in the event no archaeological evidence of any pre-existing temple was found, something else, other than a Masjid, should be constructed. A Masjid next to a Mandir, they held, would lead to permanent conflict and tensions.

They concurred with the view expressed in the earlier interview that peace in the villages had not been affected, based as it was on the age-long inter-communal ties of amity. But they could discern a certain distancing of the upper caste

Tomar Muslim converts from them. Their conversion to Islam was attributed to their greed for largesses offered by the Moghuls. They wanted to return back to the Hindu fold; but unfortunately, this was not permitted by Hinduism.

Two things were evident. There had been a systematic propaganda on the temple-mosque issue, even questionnaires had been administered in this area. The BJP influence appeared pervasive. Secondly, they had not been sufficiently made aware of the possible implications of an international censure leading to economic and trade sanctions, should the communal violence get out of control. They agreed that moderation was necessary in dealing with the relationship between the two communities.

Remarks

Group interviews have their obvious advantages and disadvantages, particularly when they are one-shot affairs. While it enables analysis of a discussion by the group, it can also obscure individual variants of the views of its members. Keeping this in mind, four observations can be made:

1. That Mandir and Masjid erected side by side would make for permanent communal tensions, was an apprehension voiced by both Muslims and Hindus.
2. Aggressive posturing or social distancing was found among upper castes, whether Hindus or Muslims. The Hindu upper castes seem to be reinforcing the framework of the Great Tradition on behalf of all Hindus. The lower caste response to this movement of ethno-religious homogenisation is not unambiguously clear; on the face of it, the consciousness of caste discriminations and the processes of Hindu homogenisation appear somewhat discordant, particularly when caste and religious ethnicities become rival reference points of competitive political mobilisations for electoral gains. One could make out that *Hindutva* made more sense to the upper castes, much less to the Chamars with whom the Julahas displayed a natural affinity. At the marco-level, there can be no better proof of this than the evidence from Bihar. Discredited in the past for one of the most unflattering records of communal violence, the Backward Caste movement in Bihar has dealt a severe dent to the *Hindutva* brand of nationalism.
3. The low caste Muslim Julahas were on the defensive being aware of the following facts: a) that Hindu sentiments relating to Ayodhya was stronger than the Muslim case for a non-functioning mosque; b) that Hindu pressure was real and much stronger on this specific issue; c) an amicable settlement which made for durable communal amity was in the best interest of all daily bread-winners. This was reflected in their flexible responses to the Ayodhya solution. This attitude of the working people was found to be pervasive, cutting across religion and caste.
4. The Ayodhya *kand* has raised issues far beyond the demolition of the Masjid. It has brought to the forefront a revaluation of the entire gamut of relationships between Hindus and Muslims, and by extension with other communities, on the determinants of nationality and secularism. The basic problematique arising out of this situation is: will nationality be determined on the basis of a 'people' with a 'citizen-loyalty' to the political-territorial state of India, or by a 'people' with a loyalty to *Hindutva*, based on the religious ethos of the majority religious community? The outcome of this will emerge out of the prevailing and countervailing forces that the society and polity has released. This is the best chance for India to become a nation from a nation-in-the becoming, that is, if we wish to crystallise as a single, united, nation-state.■

APPEAL TO CITIZENS

The outrage at Ayodhya and subsequent events have rudely shaken the foundations of communal amity and threatened the very existence of the modern Indian State.

The paramount need today is to promote awareness of this crisis and secure the commitment of citizens to the ideals of secularism and democracy. Please sign the pledge and retain a copy of the pledge and display it prominently in your home/ workplace. The campaign's objective is to collect 2 crore individual pledges over a period of one month.

You can make photocopies of this pledge and become a volunteer by collecting more signatures for the campaign. At the end of this campaign a public rally should be organised in every town/city where the pledges have been taken.

Pledge

o **I have a dream of a peaceful, united, humane, egalitarian and prosperous India.**

o **I believe that this dream cannot be realised without rooting out communalism from our land.**

o **I pledge myself to preserve and strengthen, India's unity and communal harmony.**

o **I solemnly commit myself to the vow which Gandhiji asked of all Indians:**

"With God as witness, we Hindus and Mohamedans declare that we shall behave towards one another as children of the same parents, that we shall have no differences, that the sorrows of each shall be the sorrows of the other and that each shall help the other in removing them. We shall respect each other's religion and religious feelings and shall not stand in the way of our respective religious practices. We shall always refrain from violence to each other in the name of religion."

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UNION BUDGET

Budget and Education

K.K. BALACHANDER

The Finance Minister has increased the Central outlay for education (from Rs 952 crores to Rs 1310 crores, a 37 per cent hike) for 1993-94, and it has been appreciated by many educationists in the country. He apparently seems to have taken some steps to correct the neglect this vital sector has suffered over the years. His earlier two budgets were criticised for having given a short shrift to education (and health and family welfare), and thus lacking the necessary 'human face'.

However, taking into account the drastic cuts in allocation for education in the earlier budgets, and inflation being what it is, this hike, in real terms is marginal. The Budget still allocates only about 1.9 per cent of its total expenditure on education—barely an improvement. In contrast, in many other developing countries, it exceeds 10 per cent. (See S.R. Kasbekar, "Social Sector, Belated Justice", *The Economic Times*, March 18, 1993) Even in terms of Plan outlay, our record on education is hardly praiseworthy. The percentage share of the education sector has consistently declined in the successive Five-Year Plan outlays—it was as high as 7.5 per cent in the First Plan, but by the Seventh Plan it dipped to 3.6 per cent. And the present trends indicate that even during the Eighth Plan eduation's share will remain more or less the same. In terms of proportion to the GNP also the expenditure on education still shows a disappointing picture (just 3.5 per cent). The goal of investing at least six per cent of the GNP on education appears to be too distant even after four decades of planning in the country. (See K.K. Balachander, "Education: Vital Yet Neglected", *Mainstream*, February 20, 1993)

What is more disturbing is that while raising Central Plan outlays the Finance Minister has drastically reduced Central transfers of resources to States this year, thus putting a squeeze on the States. (See Arun Ghosh, "Soft Options and Harsh Reality", *Mainstream*, March 6, 1993) This might adversely affect State investment in social sectors, especially education. This has come at a time when many State Governments are already dragging their feet in the matter of implementing educational programmes. As far as higher education is concerned, there is a feeling among the State authorities that it has already got more than its fair share in the education budget, and it will not be possible for them to sustain subsidisation of an ever-increasing number of institutions. Even the money spent on education of the 'weaker' sections is often considered as a 'burden' by the State bureaucracy although it is those at the base of the socio-economic pyramid who meet a sizeable share of the taxes (that is, indirect taxes impinging more on the vast mass of the poor than the well-to-do) that go to subsidise the (higher) education of those who later occupy top/middle level positions in the government and other public bodies.

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Effective coordination between the Centre and the States is very important especially in the field of education, but this is being neglected in spite of the fact that education now comes under the Concurrent List in the Constitution. In many countries (where there have been federal set-ups and where the tradition of local control of education is strong), even if there does not exist any constitutional obligation for that purpose, there has arisen the realisation for a substantial increase in Federal (Central) participation in education. *The modern trend of thinking is that equalisation of educational opportunities among the States and uniform standards of educational services should be considered as national responsibilities.* Certain conventions have, however, been established in these countries by which the views of the State Governments are ascertained on educational matters so that they will have the full opportunity to make their voices heard and respected.

In some countries, even with a centralised system of financing and administration, the flexibility of the decentralised system and of experimentation that local initiative and direction permitted, have not been lost. *The division of authority in education, including higher education, has not been made on political considerations, but on the fundamental* *educational issues involved.* The responsibilities of the Federal/Central Government have also been clearly defined. (See Alan Peacock and Jack Wiseman, *The Growth of Public Expenditure in the UK*, London, 1961)

Higher Education

The Finance Minister has stated that modernisation and upgradation would now receive the highest priority in the sphere of higher (and technical) education. The resource implication of this would be far greater than that of mere quantitive expansion, but the Finance Minister has not taken this into account. On the other hand, he has cut the allocation for university and higher education this year, which means a financial squeeze on especially the UGC. The first charge on the UGC budget is the maintenance and development of eleven Central universities. A major proportion of the UGC's grants are skimmed off by these universities, leaving little for over 140 State universities. Also proximity to the Centre seems to be a key factor biasing university finances as evidenced by the easy and liberal flow of funds to the Central universities, especially those located in Delhi. [Last year we have seen the authorities of these universities up in arms against the freeze in government funds (at the 1991-92 level) that was imposed; ultimately this was followed by a defreeze.]

The State universities—a majority of them suffering from severe resource-crunch—have reason to be upset at, what they feel, this discriminatory policy in funding university education. (This will be evident from the wide disparity in 'per pupil' expenditure as between Central and State universities.) The State universities have for long been at the mercy of the State Governments which in turn are perennially short of funds. The older, larger and reputed ones are the worst hit. *Measures to rescue them from financial crisis have been gaining more importance in recent years than real academic activities.* They badly need concrete support to overcome the financial crisis they are facing. Unfortunately, neither the Finance Ministry nor the UGC at the Centre has any intimate awareness of the problems and agonies of these universities which form a large part of the entire university system, both institutionwise and enrolmentwise.

The differential treatment meted out to these two types of universities had earlier been critically commented upon by the Estimates Committee, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, the Public Accounts Committee and the UGC Review Committee, but it has continued. The problems faced by State universities (and their colleges) are looked upon as the respective State Government concerns by the UGC and other government bodies. Why is it that these universities are still treated as just 'local' entities, and not as an integral part of the national university system? *If the financial crisis in State universities continues, it will surely weaken the entire edifice of higher education.*

The Centre will be able to play an effective role in promoting excellence in higher education uniformly all over the country only if it provides greater financial assistance to State universities and their colleges. In India the Centre's role in this regard has become all the more important particularly in the context of achieving many of the objectives set out in the National Policy on Education (1986). Its commitment to university education should be adequately reflected by its role not only for the broad formulation of higher education policies and programmes but also by commensurate financial support for implementation of these policies at the State level. This has, however, not been the case so far. This is surprising particularly after 'education' has been brought under the Concurrent List and the NPE (1986) itself has made a plea for a new and meaningful partnership in financing education between the Centre and the States.

Given the superior resource position of the Centre (since it pre-empts for it the most productive of the tax sources), it must accept more responsibility to share the increasing cost of higher education. The Education (Kothari) Commission (1964-66) too had observed that the sharing by the States in respect of programmes sponsored by the UGC (especially in backward States) should be reduced to the minimum possible extent. The Centre and the UGC are responsible for the maintenance and development of *all* universities in the country and should treat them alike as national institutions. This is precisely what the Concurrecy and Entry 66 in Schedule VII actually intends. Without adequate financial resources, far more than currently provided, there can be no progress in higher (and technical) education except marginally here and there.

University-Industry Collaboration

In the emerging pattern of funding university and higher education, however, the thrust appears to be in making them fend for themselves; they must find ways of obtaining funds from private sources, especially the industry. To that end, and to bring universities closer to industry, the Finance Minister has raised the income-tax deduction given to contributions to approved universities from 50 per cent at present to 100 per cent. This would mean these universities becoming more responsive to the needs of industry. Unfortunately, the universities have shown little inclination towards entering into a meaningful collaboration with industry, nor have the business houses developed a culture responsive to funding higher education.

University-industry collaboration, however, needs to be promoted in view of the difficult days ahead for higher education. And the environment today appears to be more favourable for taking some bold initiatives by universities in the matter of mobilising resources from this source than it has been at any time in the past. Even if the government provides more funds, it might prove to be inadequate considering the huge claims that the universities would make in the years ahead. So far the universities have made little effort to establish closer rapport with the business community and make it conscious of the financial constraints and challenges being faced by them in recent times. That is why the business houses and other organisations have not gravitated to them.

The universities should shed this policy of academic isolation. Also the Indian business leaders should accept the fact that wealth and economic power entail some responsibility for the welfare of the community—at least a part of what comes from the people must go back to the people. Such a spirit of common good was present in India before independence when a number of higher educational institutions came into existence with the active support of private individuals/trusts/organisations; in fact they took great pride in initiating such activities, and financed them liberally. Some fresh efforts need to be taken to rekindle this spirit among our business leaders.

For the academia-industry partnership to hold together, however, certain guidelines and mutual guarantees will, of course, have to be framed, as for example, protecting the essential freedom and objectivity of the academic staff to choose the direction of teaching/research, the commitment of both the parties to safeguard academic values and the good of the public, selection of appropriate staff from both sides who would work full-time to coordinate the programme, etc. Also, the teachers should not be treated as employees of the industry. At the same time, the academics could be a little more practical, and not adopt an 'ivory tower' approach. Much of the research conducted by academics have gone unnoticed, or comes to nothing, because of this attitude.

Conclusion

Despite the Finance Minister's effort to restore a part of the cuts made in the earlier years in the field of education, this vital sector is still made to survive on 'grace' marks in the matter of funding. This lukewarm attitude to education has cost the Indian economy rather dearly in terms of productivity. This has perhaps happened owing to the overstress on high and quick growth rates, among other reasons, for political mileage in the short-run. Little is realised that although educational investment does not fructify immediately and involves a long gestation period, it is a permanent socially beneficial action, especially in terms of improved productivity and quality of life of the people. If this vital sector is given a low priority, it will threaten the welfare of the entire nation. Such a neglect will not only be short-sighted, but also bad economics. And as an economist and a former academic, Dr Manmohan Singh must surely know this.

Education will have to continue as a *core* government sector activity in the years ahead. *This sector is of fundamental importance for overall structural reforms. This is an area where the government needs to do more, and do it better.* Improvements in the living standards in many (now rich) countries have often been the direct result of government intervention in the domains of education, health and food. Gone are the days when many Western economists/experts advocated a policy of least intervention in social sectors like education and health. The recent victory of Bill Clinton in the US Presidential election could be attributed largely to the promises he made to provide better education and health services, and more jobs. A new thrust to education should form the central part of our development agenda.

Over the next five years the outlay on education should be raised from the present level of 3.5 per cent of the GNP to six per cent as recommended by the Kothari Commission (1966), the NPE (1986) and the Ramamurti Committee (1992). Otherwise, the gap between India and the advanced countries—and even some developing countries—will widen so rapidly that it will not be possible for it to keep pace. In his Budget speech the Financial Minister had stated that education is an area which is close to his heart. This is a good note on which to start this financial year. But how far he will be able to translate his belief into action in the coming years is anybody's guess. ■

Ambedkar's Sense of Social Justice and Constitutional Spirit

K.I. VIBHUTE

This article is being published on occasion of Bharat Ratna Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's birth anniversary that falls on April 14. The author is a Reader in Law, Post-Graduate Department of Law, University of Poona. —Editor

Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar had been the most articulate spokesman of the exploited and downtrodden in Indian society and fought against all social evils throughout his life. He was described as the 'modern Manu'. He prescribed a different set of values for the socially disadvantaged and the poor. His quest was to create, through law, a homogeneous and egalitarian society premised on equality, liberty, justice and universal brotherhood. He accordingly attempted to give a new law, the Constitution of India, *inter alia* giving recognition to these values. It is, therefore, most appropriate that the Government of India is celebrating the centenary year of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar as the *Year of Social Justice*. Indeed it is a recognition of the fact that even after fortythree years of our independence, social injustice perpetuated by, and resulting from, social stratification based on caste, social gradation and inequality which Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar wanted to remove from Indian society, yet remains a formidable social problem to be tackled.

II

IN this paper an attempt has been made to review the legal, social and political thoughts of Dr Ambedkar reflected in the making of the Indian Constitution, his writings and speeches and examine their relevance in the contemporary socio-politico-legal scenario. Such a review and reassessment in the emerging socio-political trends and thoughts, dominated by separatist movements, terrorism, both individual as well as state, and exhibiting scant regard for fraternity, equality and justice, assumes special significance in the *Year of Social Justice*. These trends are undoubtedly not only disturbing the constitutional aspirations, spirit and scheme but are also challenging, rather threatening, the *rule of law*.

However, the present paper is confined to the constitutional scheme and spirit of social justice which Dr Ambedkar strove for.

III

THE term 'social justice', in the ultimate analysis and in true perception into its entirety, revolves around **equality, liberty, justice** and **fraternity**. Social justice basically involves political and economic or distributive justice and intends devising measures—political and economic—to reduce the ill-effects of the centuries-old social inequalities dominated by the denial of a few fundamental values such as equality, humanity and human dignity to the persons in the lower strata of society.

Dr Ambedkar who, alongwith his community fellows, experienced anomalous ill-treatment by Hindus of the so-called higher castes denying equality and liberty to the *Harijans*, the so-called Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, seriously endeavoured for the social emancipation of the untouchables and the downtrodden people. He firmly believed that only the democratic process and constitutional means can eradicate bleeding social inequalities, indignities and economic disparities. Dr Ambedkar observed in the Constituent Assembly:

> Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy. What does social democracy mean? It means a way of life which recognises liberty, equality, and fraternity as the principles of life. These principles of liberty, equality and fraternity are not to be treated as separate items in a trinity. They form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy. Liberty cannot be divorced from equality, equality cannot be divorced from liberty. Nor can liberty and equality be divorced from fraternity. Without equality, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many. Equality without liberty, would kill individual initiative. Without fratenity, liberty and equality could not become a natural course of things. It would require a constable to enforce them. We must begin by acknowledging the fact that there is a complete absence

> of two things in Indian society. One of these is equality. On the social plane, we have in India a society based on the principles of graded inequality which means elevation for some and degradation for others. On the economic plane, we have a society in which there are some who have immense wealth as against many who live in abject poverty

He posed the following questions:

> How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life?

And he warned:

> If we continue to deny it for long we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow-up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up.[1]

Against the background of this philosophy of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar that perceived a new 'just social order' embracing 'equality, liberty and fraternity' and recognised human dignity through constitutional measures, his quest for social and political revolution through constitutional law needs to be appreciated.

In the light of the injustice—social, economic, and political—leading to almost total denial of the basic human values and amenities to the lowest strata of Indian society, and the inhuman treatment met by the underprivileged people, the Constitution of India, of which Dr Ambedkar was the main architect, envisioned a new society with the cherished goals of *justice*, social, economic, political; *liberty* of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; and *equality* of status and of opportunity.[2]

It is pertinent to note that the juxtaposition of the concepts of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution is most deliberate and significant. It is noteworthy that the first place is given to justice. While elaborating 'justice' the Constitution-makers stressed that social and economic justice occupy a higher position in the order of priorities than political justice. It seems that there was this realisation that political justice, which merely ensures equal right to vote, would be meaningless if people are also not guaranteed social and economic justice.

The concept of social and economic justice can, in fact, be described as the most important fundamental norms of the Constitution of India. A fleeting glance at Part III, dealing with Fundamental Rights, and Part IV, dealing with Directive Principles of State Policy, of the Constitution reveals the quest of the founding fathers for socio-economic transformation through constitutional measures.

The values of justice, liberty, equality befitting the dignity of the human individual proclaimed in the Preamble are made more elaborate and substantive in Parts III and IV of the Constitution. The Constitution ensures equality and prohibits discrimination, which unfortunately hitherto led to the essence of social injustice. Article 14 provides for equality before law and equal protection of the laws. Article 17 abolishes 'untouchability' and makes its practice *in any form* an offence punishable by law. Article 15 *inter alia* provides that no citizen shall be discriminated against the use of public places like shops, wells, eating houses, etc. on account of his religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.[3] Article 23, which guarantees the right against exploitation, prohibits traffic in human beings, *beggary* and similar forms of forced labour, another great social evil.[4] Article 16, which guarantees equality of opportunity in matters of public employment, also prohibits discrimination in employment based on religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or residence. Article 29 (2) bars the denial of admission to any citizen into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them. However, Article 15 (4), notwithstanding the provisions of Articles 15 (1) and 29 (2), empowers the State to make any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. And Article 16 (4), notwithstanding the provisions of Article 16, however, enables a State to 'make reservations of appointments or posts in favour of any backward classes of citizens which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State.

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IT is important to recall that it was Dr Ambedkar who provided for the inclusion of the word 'backward' in the Fundamental Rights Chapter. In Fundamental Rights, as reported by the

Committee on Fundamental Rights and Minorities, presided over by Sardar Patel, the provision for reservation in employment was made in favour of 'any class' not adequately represented in the services. The Drafting Committee headed by Dr Ambedkar subsequently introduced 'backward' before the 'class of citizens' to limit reservation only for the backward classes. The idea at that time was to grant opportunities to the people who were in minority.

The Directive Principles of State Policy, though not enforceable in any court of law, are 'fundamental in the governance of the country', and further ensure socio-economic justice. Article 38, which is the core of the Directive Principles, lays down that 'the State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of national life'. The Directive Principles have undoubtedly been guiding the policy-makers and the courts. It is important to recall that Dr Ambedkar had perceived the Directive Principles as 'instruments of instructions' to the State and not merely pious declarations. He desired that the legislative and executive should not merely give lip-service to them but that they should be made the basis of all executive and legislative actions that may be taken in the governance of the country.[5]

Thus the emphasis in the scheme constituted by the 'Preamble', the 'Fundamental Rights' and the 'Directive Principles of State Policy' is to build an egalitarian society embracing socio-economic justice.

In spite of the elaborate constitutional scheme and mechanism endeavouring socio-economic transformation and thereby envisaging a 'just social order' ensuring 'justice and equality' and demonstrating fraternity, the prevailing social and political scenario unfortunately exhibits scant regard to these constitutional values and scheme. We have been witnessing social tensions, communal disharmony and riots against the measures of distributive justice and attempts at reorganisation of the existing social order and the 'politics of castes and of reservations'. Instances of communal riots and social tensions arising out of implementation of measures aimed at socio-economic justice, such as abolition of untouchability and bonded labour, reservations in educational institutions and employment, distribution of agricultural lands to the 'landless' and 'tenants' are still fresh in our minds. Issues such as criteria for determining social and educational backwardness, quantum and duration of reservation, fields of reservation and efficiency and equality of opportunity stemming from the recommendations of the Mandal Commission are also unresolved and still adding fuel to social tensions and the politics of reservation.

IV

THUS the social and political scenario in vogue unambiguously reveals a wide gap between the constitutional promise of securing justice, equality, and fraternity which Dr Ambedkar strove for and their attainment. Little has been done and much is undone in all these spheres of consitutionalism and its spirit. A serious and comprehensive review of the pertinent factors—social, political and legal—thwarting the attainment of the consitutional goals becomes, therefore, imperative. Such a review in the centenary year of Bharat Ratna Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, now being observed as the 'Social Justice Year', carries a special significance.

It is high time to undertake a sincere and honest exercise on the part of the policy-makers and policy-implementers to translate Dr Ambedkar's dream into a reality. In the present socio-political scenario it undoubtedly needs strong political will and courage to implement the constitutional mandate and spirit by rising above party politics and the 'politics of castes and of reservations'. Such an endeavour would indeed be the real tribute to Dr Ambedkar in the *Social Justice Year*. ■

Footnotes

1 *Constituent Assembly Debates*, Vol. XI, pp 944-945.
2 *Preamble*.
3 The Parliament subsequently passed the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.
4 Further substituted by the Bonded Labor (Abolition) Act, 1976.
5. See *Constituent Assembly Debates*, Vol. VII, p. 1141.

BOOK REVIEW

Bird's Eye-View of Ambedkar's Ideas

H.A. GANI

Political Thought of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar by R.K. Kshirsagar; Intellectual Publishing House, New Delhi; 1992; Rs 200.

R.K. Kshirsagar is known for his academic writings on Dr B.R. Ambedkar. The book under review consists of twentytwo chapters. The author has undertaken an overall examination and defence of Dr Ambedkar's views on almost all the aspects ranging from his thoughts on society, religion, state, justice, democracy, national integration, minority problems to those on States' reorganisation and the foreign policy of India.

After presenting the life-sketch of Dr B.R. Ambedkar, Kshirsagar proceeds to highlight the influences on him of three great masters, namely, Lord Buddha, Sant Kabir and Mahatma Jyotiba Phule. While discussing his views on society, the author points out that Dr Ambedkar refused to call the Hindu society a society since it does not possess the essentials of a society. He gives a lucid exposition of Dr Ambedkar's concept of an ideal society and the ways suggested by him of realising an ideal society. Nevertheless, the author fails to observe that Dr Ambedkar attached great importance to communication. He opined:

> The only way by which we can come to possess things in common with one another is by being in communication with one another. This is merely another way of saying that society continues to exist by communication indeed in communication.

Since the Hindu society lacks the communication of ideas and emotions, he refused to accept it as a society.

Similarly, Dr Ambedkar rejected Hinduism and embraced Buddhism alongwith a large number of his followers in October 1956. This is mainly because he believed that

> religion must be a matter of principle only. It cannot be a matter of rules. The moment it degenerates into rules it ceases to be a religion as it kills responsibility which is the essence of a truly religious act.

Needless to say that the state is very important for the society. Both the state and society complement each other in eradicating various evils of the society and thereby make the lives of individuals happy. The author has rightly pointed out that Dr Ambedkar regarded the state as a means to achieve the end of the well-being of the people and believed that the conditions of the Scheduled Castes and other weaker sections could be improved if they were given adequate representation in civil services. Hence, he strongly pleaded for the reservation of seats for these sections in the government as well as administrative services.

Defining his concept of justice as another name for liberty, equality and fraternity, the author argues that Dr Ambedkar asserted that mere enunciation of the principle of justice without creating suitable infrastructure for achieving social justice is futile. While suggesting means to secure social, economic and political justice, he upheld peaceful and constitutional means as safe and efficacious.

Dr Ambedkar was undoubtedly a staunch protagonist of democracy. He considered the concept of democracy as dynamic. The author in order to substantiate this view of Dr Ambedkar cites the concept of ancient Athenian democracy and that of the present one and attempts to indicate how the forms and objectives of both kept on changing from time to time in tune with the change in circumstances.

Of course, the author's endeavour to highlight the necessary conditions for the success of democracy as advocated by Dr Ambedkar is commendable. But surprisingly, he has missed a very pertinent observation made by Dr D.R. Jatav in this regard. Dr Jatav says:

> Dr Ambedkar wanted that for a successful democracy non-feudal society is essential...

Besides, the author has not explicitly mentioned that one of the main reasons why Dr Ambedkar pleaded for democracy was that he regarded democracy as a means to bring about national integration. He asserted:

> Democracy is not merely a form of government. It is primarily a mode of associated living of cojoint communicated experience. It is essentially an attitude of respect and reverence towards fellowmen.

That Dr Ambedkar was farsighted enough is obvious from the fact that while framing the Constitution of India he refused to accept the right to property as a fundamental right. What he said long back was later on implemented by the Government of India through the 44th Amendment of the Constitution which made right to property as a statutory right. Dr Ambedkar also propounded state socialism with a view to preventing dictatorship of private employer and exploitation of the poor. He opined:

> It is only by this that one can achieve the triple objects, namely, to establish socialism, retain parliamentary democracy and avoid dictatorship.

Although Dr Ambedkar upheld state socialism, he, however, failed to incorporate this in the Constitution. His speeches in the Constituent Assembly do not clearly explain the reasons for this state of affairs. Unfortunately, an elaborate discussion on this point is missing in the book. The author simply states in the conclusion that Dr Ambedkar desired to incorporate the provision of state socialism in the Constitution.

The problems of minorities are very crucial and need special attention. As such, Dr Ambedkar struggled to secure the rights and special safeguards for the minorities in general and the Scheduled Castes in particular. He applied the criterion of socio-economic backwardness for determining a minority. He observed:

> The Scheduled Castes are more than a minority and that any protection given to the citizens and to the minorities will not be adequate for the Scheduled Castes.

It is important to note that national integration assumes more significance for Indian society which is divided on the basis of religion, caste, language and region. Dr Ambedkar was well aware of this fact and paid special attention to it. Dr D.R. Jatav points out:

> National unity was the fundamental aim of Dr Ambedkar's political thought.

The author having discussed various divisive forces, highlights the remedies suggested by Dr Ambedkar to do away with them.

As regards reorganisation of the States, Dr Ambedkar, while accepting the linguistic principle, said:

> It must provide against the break of India's unity. A state is built on fellow-feeling. The existence of this fellow-feeling is the foundation of a stable and democratic state.

The author concludes that Dr Ambedkar had firm faith in democratic values and viewed emancipation of the untouchables as an indispensable part of his wider perspective of justice.

By and large the book in its present form is certainly useful for those who want to have a bird's eye-view of Dr Ambedkar's thoughts. However, due to lack of indepth discussion on various aspects, one may fail to have a proper perspective of Dr Ambedkar's views. It would have been better had the author concentrated on a few aspects of Dr Ambedkar's thoughts and discussed them in detail. ■

SAARC MEMBER-STATES

Mutual Interest In Internal Affairs

M.S. RAJAN

Ever since 1947 India has sought to follow a "good neighbour" policy towards its neighbours in the Indian subcontinent. The crucial element of this policy was/is non-interference in their internal affairs. It was assumed, not only by India but all the other states of the subcontinent, that this element has a certain reciprocity and mutuality of interests; but actually this has not been so in all the 45 years.

Considering the many commonalities among these states (of history, culture, especially religion and language) this assumed reciprocity and mutuality was a difficult exercise for all the states, although because of India's size/strength (and not because of India's desire to interfere) the blame was usually on India by the other states. And this unfortunate tendency on the part of the other states was partly encouraged (until recently at least), willingly or unwillingly, by the external powers and writers from those states.

The author is a Professor Emeritus in the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

The destruction of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992 has had many consequences to the intra-state relations in the subcontinent. A major one—not fully exposed as yet—is the recognition (both by India and the other states) that the 45-year old policy of mutual unconcern and/or non-intervention in their internal affairs was largely pretentious, unobserved by all of them (not just India alone, as the other states accuse). They seem at last, to acknowledge that inevitably all of them cannot avoid in at least being concerned with developments in each other's internal developments.

The destruction of the Babri Masjid spectacularly exposed this new recognition and acknowledgement. The National Assemblies of both Pakistan and Bangladesh have formally condemned India for the destruction of the Masjid. Asked by a journalist whether it was proper for the Bangladesh Assembly to pass the resolution, the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh reportedly remarked (*The Times of India*, February 1, 1993) that there was "nothing wrong" in the Assembly adopting the resolution

> since the Parliament in a democracy could discuss any serious issue affecting peace and harmony. The Indian Parliament could also discuss Bangladesh if any serious issue warranted such a discussion.

This is an astonishing admission at a high level of what has, in fact, been happening for many years in most South Asian states—the mutual concern/interest of these states in all major developments in these states, even though these states maintain the formal objections (and protest against them) to the concern/intervention of one or more of the other states.

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AN outstanding recent example of concern/intervention in internal affairs of neighbouring states is the Indian airforce air-dropping (in June 1987) of essential food/medicines to the people of Jaffna who, the Indian Government thought, were being starved due to isolation, because of their alleged sympathies for the LTTE. The Indian Government did this when the Sri Lankan authorities declined to permit supplies directly by sea. The Sri Lankan authorities, naturally (and rightly too), protested against this exceptional violation by India of its own policies of non-intervention in the internal affairs of neighbours, and many states (India's other neighbours included) took objection to this action by India, largely through diplomatic privacy. But it is reasonably certain that all of them *understood* the reasons for the Indian action—namely, Indian humanitarian concern for the people of Jaffna who are of the same ethnic/cultural stock as the 50 million Tamils in India. There is no way any state (including neighbours) can prevent such concern and/or intervention, whatever the formal commitment of states against mutual concern/interference in each other's internal affairs on matters involving commonalities.

In the case of India and its neighbours, this mutual concern/interest (and occasional interventions too) has been intermittently happening, despite formal objections/protests. This is inevitable, and natural too, for all the states of the Indian subcontinent, because of the numerous commonalities; only rarely is this unavoidable necessity been acknowledged, as the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh has recently done.

In a sense, such concern/intervention, especially among neighbours, indeed flows out of a policy of "good neighbourliness", irrespective of the formal legal/political position. It is the positive element of this good neighbourliness which these states do not care to acknowledge, at least publicly. Perhaps the main reason for this situation is the asymmetric capability of India on the one hand, and the other states on the other, for physical intervention. But, this capability has no relevance to India's relations with the other states of the SAARC, because both as a matter of policy and actual conduct—barring, of course, the exceptional case of air-dropping of supplies in Jaffna—India has sought to respect the independence, sovereignty and equality of these states.

It is time that all members of the SAARC openly recognise the unavioidable necessity of their mtual concern/interest in the internal affairs of each other which are rooted in their commonalities. such as ethnicity, history/culture. This is quite apart from the general, universal, concern for the observance of human rights among all states.

This does not mean that they need to give up the traditional, time-sanctified norms of state behaviour including especially non-interference in the internal affairs. Only an open acknowlegement (such as that of the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh) is called for that it is perfectly legitimate for the SAARC member-states to be concerned/interested in the internal developments of states on matters of ethnic, cultural commonalities, which do not amount to "intervention" in the conventional diplomati jargon. The fact that India happens to be the biggest and the strongest of the states does not entitle it to any greater concern/interest than, reciprocally, the other states in India's internal affiars. What is called for (and what has, in fact, been happening all the time for the last 45 years) is to avoid the extremes of undue concern/interest on the one hand (as for example, regarding the forms of government which do not conform to traditional democratic patterns), and complete indifference to events in each other's society (as for example, the Janata Government's attitude to the judicial murder of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in 1977, against which many other countries of the world appealed) on the other. ■

Voice of Intrepid Journalists

The 1992 Chameli Devi Jain Award for an Outstanding Woman Mediaperson was given to two noted young journalists—Ms Teesta Setalvad, Senior Correspondent of Business India *in Bombay; and Ms Sucheta Dalal, Assistant Business Editor,* The Times of India, *Bombay. The Award presentation ceremony, organised by the Media Foundation, took place in New Delhi on March 30, 1993.*

The citation for Ms Teesta Setalvad read:

> *Teesta Setalvad has been a sensitive reporter on gender, social and economic affairs. She was marked out for an exceptional blend of feeling, fairness and courageous clarity while reporting on communal strife in Gujarat and on the Bombay killings of December 1992 and January 1993. Her reportage placed the violence in perspective and showed professionalism at a time when the atmosphere was socially and emotionally surcharged. Her deep social concern extended beyond the call of duty in her exertions with other civic-minded citizens in a vigilant group for riot victims.*
>
> *Richly meriting recognition, Teesta Setalvad also symbolises a splendid band of mediapersons all over the country whose humanity and integrity played a large part in enabling the nation to see the horror and pain of the violence that swept the country and begin to take corrective measures to heal the wounds.*
>
> *In conferring on her the 1992 Chameli Devi Jain Award for an Outstanding Woman Mediaperson, the Media Foundation pays tribute to her work and role which has informed and inspired people.*

The citation for Ms Sucheta Dalal read:

> *Sucheta Dalal, broke new ground in uncovering the multi-million-rupee stockmarket scam. Through her painstaking efforts her meticulous regard for detail that characterised her news reports and analytical write-ups, Sucheta Dalal laid bare before the Indian public the complexities and intricacies that shrouded the truth behind the fraudulent dealings in the securities industry. It was Ms Dalal's persistent campaign on the front and business pages of her newspaper that led to the appointment of the Joint Committee of Parliament to inquire into and report on the scam.*
>
> *The professional preseverence with which Sucheta Dalal went about the task of ruthlessly exposing the operators, whether these were domestic or foreign banks or public financial institutions, has set a new benchmark in business journalism in India, hitherto regarded as an exclusive male preserve.*
>
> *In conferring on Sucheta Dalal the Chameli Devi Jain Award for an Outstanding Woman Mediaperson, the Media Foundation pays tribute to her contribution in the fields of investigative and financial journalism.*

The following are the responses of the recipients at the Award presentation ceremony. —Editor

I Feel Humble and Proud to be a Journalist Today

TEESTA SETALVAD

Even today, after a superficial return to normalcy, the streets and by-lanes of Bombay carry lurking images of those spine-chilling ten days in January—days when the city cowered, paralysed with fear as large mobs steered attacks, hacked and burnt neighbours and children, raped women, and torched or smashed homes.

Three months after the first round of violence, most damaged houses are unmended and small businesses ruined. Palpable tension remains. At least 500 persons are still missing. Until two weeks ago, decomposed bodies were still being discovered in nullahs. Indiscriminate arrests of Muslims and their brutal and humiliating treatment in police lock-ups are revealed daily before the Indian People's Human Rights Tribunal.

And now, inevitably, we are faced with the consequences. When 13 bomb blasts reverberated through Bombay, it was just a more deafening echo of violence. It is frightening when there is increasingly talk of a violent reply as if all other options have simply dried up and as if the problem did not itself begin with violence.

I recall the day towards the end of January when a group of concerned writers from Bombay anxiously urged a Union Minister to act before extremist tendencies manifested themselves among Muslims.

The State Government has avoided hard decisions. While some chauvinist Maharashtrian leaders have been arrested, their supremo's rantings continue unchecked. These writings in a certain party's mouthpiece go beyond inciting violence. The paper openly claims credit for what happened in January and is doing everything it can to make the seeds of communal prejudice sprout and bloom.

After 10 years in journalism this is for me a thrilling moment and one of great significance. But throughout this decade, never have I felt such a deep sense of foreboding as today, of being ominously close to the brink. In all previous riots, there always were stories of the day after when women protected each other rather than led attacks and when the cosmopolitan character of bastis, mohallas, chawls and apartment blocks did not change. Whatever else happened, the attacks never came from next door and whole communities did not lose hope of a dignified and secure existence.

The Chameli Devi Jain Award is for me much more than a personal achievement. When other professions have been guarded in their response to this threat this Award is a convincing declaration of where the media stands. It makes me both humble and proud to be a journalist. ■

An Honour to Business Journalism

SUCHETA DALAL

I am extremely honoured that the Media Foundation has nominated me as one of the recepients of the prestigious Chameli Devi Award for 1992.

I am told that I have been nominated for my coverage of the securities scam. Although it is personally an honour for me, I think it is an honour to business journalism as well.

In my first year in the profession, I was badly shaken up when a colleague from the general section asked: "Aren't you ashamed of being a business journalist?"

We have come a long way since then. Business journalism has now truly come into its own.

While my colleague, R. Srinivasan, and I broke the first story, the entire press has unearthed several explosive facts which brought the entire scandal tumbling into the open.

My friends at the *Indian Express* and T.V.R. Shenoi at the *Business Standard* have also done a marvellous job at going after specific angles. Probably for the first time in business journalism there was a sense of intense competition among journalists across the entire business to unearth new facts and stories.

However, the entire effort seems on the verge of coming to nought. Investigations by the CBI, the JPC and the Reserve Bank seem to be meandering into nowhere. No specific charges have been framed though it is almost a year since the scam broke.

I now fear that the huge public relations machinery of particularly the foreign banks is likely to make a laughing stock of the country and its press. Several of these banks have managed to convince the press and investment analysts in their countries that they are victims of a Third World country's efforts to pass the buck.

The Public Relations Manager of Standard Chartered recently told me how the bank, which has been the worst affected in the scam, has "taken the blow on its chin" and its share price has in fact been moving steadily up on the London Stock Exchange.

Yes, Standard Chartered has brought in a huge amount of precious foreign exchange—over US $ one billion and has sacked almost 15 people. But it has also admitted to violating almost every rule and guideline issued by the RBI. But is that all? While the bank sees itself as having got over its problem at Bombay we have not worked out its violations and decided on penalties.

The sooner the investigating authorities are through with their job, the better it will be for the stock markets and the credibility of the country's regulators. At the same time, it will have a positive impact on the foreign investors who already have been looking upto the country ever since the liberalisation process was initiated and specially after the latest Budget proposals. ■

In the Name of Ram

MODHUMITA MOJUMDAR

Religion, any and every religion, preaches peace. At least the propounders of religious thought in every country and at all ages have done so over the centuries. It is those acting after them and in their name who have desecrated religion and turned it topsy-turvy—sometimes to mean quite the opposite of what it was intended to mean.

The very word Islam means peace; and Mohammad, the Prophet of Islam, had been forced to take up the sword in self-defence, after being tortured and hounded by his own tribesmen, the Qureishis, for about a decade. It is true that Islam propounds the concept of *jehad* or holy war, but there are two types of *jehad*—Jehad-e-Asgar, or battle in self-defence; and Jehad-e-Akbar, or victory over one's senses. It is the latter which is considered to be the more superior form of *jehad*. It was only with fasting and meditation that Mohammad came to hear his inner voice which said: "There are no gods but (only one) God." *La ilahi il Allah*—the opening sentence of the Quran.

Yet, countries have been invaded and attacked in the name of Islam and people forcibly converted. In India, ancient temples have been plundered and razed to the ground and mosques erected in their place. While *mehr* or the settlement of a certain lumpsum amount of money on the woman by her husband at the time of marriage—to be entirely hers in the event of a divorce—has now been reduced to a token gesture, at least in India, the evil of dowry has permeated from the Hindu society to every other religious community, including the various sects of the Muslims.

Women numbered more than men in Arabia at the time of Mohammad and female infanticide was prevalent. The Prophet abolished the latter evil practice. Men could marry any number of wives; the Prophet not only restricted the number of wives to four but also laid down the condition that each one of them be treated equally. This is certainly not what a polygamous Muslim does in this day and age.

Similarly, there were those who swore by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who said that instead of following an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth principle, "...resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." And yet the Christian world has fought some of the deadliest battles in our times. Even in the Middle Ages, the Crusades fought to capture the lucrative trade route to the Orient were fought in the name of Christianity ostensibly to win temporal control over the shrines holy to the faith. This was at a time when women suspected to be witches were burnt at the stake and lepers forced out of their homes and villages and required to ring bells whenever they came near human habitat so that others could avoid contamination. And yet, Jesus had consorted with both prostitutes and leprosy patients in his compassion.

The Buddha had never spoken of God—only of *Nirvana* that would come to redeem people from the cycle of rebirth with all its pain and anguish if they followed strictly the righteous eight-fold path. Yet not only has man himself been turned to a deity, certain sects of Buddhists worship innumerable gods and godesses. Indeed, the greatest irony is that the Brahminical faith that ultimately drove out Buddhism from all of India, bar a few far-flung regions in the Himalayas, itself incorporated the Buddha as one of the 10 *avatars*—albeit a lesser *avatar* than Ram and Krishna! It is also an irony and a revelation of the Machiavellian tactics of the Brahminical faith that has now adopted the garb of *Hindutva* that even the Adivasis following the truly indigenous faiths of this country (including animistic, tree-worshipping and other cults which do not come within the ambit of the Brahminical faith), have also been labelled as Hindus, as have the Sikhs, Jains, Arya Samajists, Brahmo Samajists and others, at least in matters of law.

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NOBODY knows what bug bit them, but the great diaspora of the Aryans from the south of the Urals to Europe, Persia and the Indian subcontinent took place around 1850 BC. The Aryan hordes drove away the settled and culturally superior people of the Indus valley and the Indo-Gangetic plain, possibly Dravidians who had penetrated the subcontinent earlier, to the south of the Vindhyas, just as the Dravidians, who had probably come from the Mediterranian coast had driven away the indigenous Negroid and Austric peoples to the forested hills and away from the fertile palins.

It was in India that the Vedas were composed in a language that was a sister language of that in which the Avesta was being composed in Persia. It was, however, the Upanishads, written subsequently, that took the *dharma*, later known as Hinduism, to its greatest heights. However, the concept of caste also emanated in this period, with the Aryan Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya men entitled to wear the sacred thread, but women, the Sudras and the outcastes denied this status symbol.

The Vedic Brahmins were beef-eaters and had said that, even after the death of her husband, a woman should not immolate herself on his funeral pyre. It is only in later times that the anti-cow slaughter campaign and the practice of the so-called *sati* became popular and symbols of *Hindutva*.

ANNOUNCEMENT

INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES

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WOMEN'S STUDIES

Conference Theme:
The Dynamics of the New Economic Policy:
Implications for Women

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Religion, therefore, can elevate people to almost godhood as well as degrade them to the level of blood-thirsty animals—or worse, because the lion and tiger do not kill unless they are hungry; and the planned demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya is something that no beast of the jungle would do. Had there been an ancient temple dedicated to Ram at that site Babar must have evinced the crassest from of Philistinism in destroying it and building a mosque in its place. But two wrongs do not make a right. The Babri Masjid was more than 400 years old, and by destroying it the Hindus have not been able to resurrect the ancient temple. On the other hand, they have acted as vandals, both in the religious and aesthetic senses, by destroying an ancient structure. Even if the Government of India now constructs a new mosque in its place, as it has promised to do, it cannot bring back Babar's structure. And the plan for the new Ram temple at the disputed site proposed by the BJP, VHP, Bajrang Dal and Shiv Sena is ugly in the extreme and cannot ever compare with the ancient temple that might have stood at that site once upon a time.

By this act and the riots in several cities, most particularly those in Bombay, the Hindu faith which had in earlier centuries been an example of catholicity, assimilating and imbibing the essence of various strands of religious thought, has shown the basest levels to which religion can reduce people addicted to this opium. Religion indeed is the opium of the people which can raise people to the highest levels of humanity or reduce men to the crassest forms of bestiality. And it is the latter quality that resulted in the demolition of the ancient Babri Masjid by a frenzied mob of Hindus.

In a similar situation, Gandhi, the Mahatma, had said at a prayer meeting in Patna on March 17, 1947:

> Those who desecrated the mosque were not men but devils; because mosques, temples or churches are all houses of the Lord. I have come here to convey my grief. You may perhaps be smiling and thinking that whatever happened was all very good. But I assert that this is potent injustice. I am grieved when I hear that Muslims have desecrated a temple. Should I retaliate by desecrating a mosque? How can such damage save the temple or benefit the Hindu religion?

It was indeed intolerence of this spirit of empathy and catholicity that provoked a rabid Hindu of the RSS fold to shoot dead a man whose dying words were "Hey Ram". ■

NIKHIL : Of Mice and Men...

(Continued from page 3)

the students' union poll results should serve as a warning signal to both. New forces are bestirred with new slogans and new perspectives.

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THE Tripura election results may appear to have a different angle, but if one analyses them carefully, it is the same message that comes out of them as that from UP. For five years, the Congress in coalition with the TUJS had ruled the State in a reckless manner, in which corruption and goonda raj prevailed. This was personified in the high-visibility of the Union Minister, Santosh Mohan Deb, placed in charge of Tripura by the party President. His antics attracted rather uncomplimentary attention of the Chief Election Commissioner who, no friend of the Communists, put off the poll for over a month.

In Tripura, the Left victory is thus a repudiation of the corruption-goonda politics that ruled there. No doubt, the CPM is a formidable force in Tripura; at the same time, its leadership would be reading the poll results wrongly if it takes the electorate's verdict as just a vindication of its party line. As the party out of power exposing corruption and fighting the establishment goonda as also administrative high-handedness, the CPM could trounce the Congress with overwhelming public support.

This is an advantage which the CPM long entrenched in office in West Bengal would not necessarily be able to capitalise. Because, with its record-breaking stint as the ruling party in West Bengal, it could not altogether ward off the tentacles of corruption and muscle-politics as could be seen in the West Bengal CPM leadership's surprise repudiation of its own government's Finance Minister's recent strictures against the unsavoury record of the Peerless insurance. Nor does it help the CPM leadership with its rather defensive stand on the links of some sections of the party with the bomb storage gambler king, Rashid. The official stand of the West Bengal CPM on the issue amounts in plain words to taking up the defence that the Congress showed the way of having links with the underworld dons and the CPM has only followed it in that direction upto just a short distance.

The message from Agartala as it is from Allahabad and Aligarh is that conventional politics is fast getting discredited and new forces, untainted by the corrosion of the established political parties, are emerging. These new forces, as yet unconsolidated, may let loose angry turbulence without being able to make the most of them in terms of election politics; all the same their emergence beckons that the old order can no longer hold.

New strirrings are here to stay reflecting the gathering discontent within the silent majority. The best laid schemes of mice and men have a tendency to go awry. ■

(April 6)

J.N. DIXIT : India and US

(Continued from page 6)

With all due respect to American laws involving sanctions and export controls, these policies ignore the basic social, historical and cultural ingredients of national aspiration in a country like ours. While conceding that export controls may retard or slow down acquisitions of strategic technologies, they cannot divert a country like India where national capabilities in some areas are fairly advanced. Ironically, such denial regimes have spurred indigenous development of capabilities and have not prevented countries like Iraq and Pakistan to acquire technologies through subterfuge. Why cannot we build on a successful agreement like the Indo-US MOU on technology transfer to address mutual concerns? What we see instead is a growing erosion through unilateral actions of a successful regime like the Indo-US MOU.

The study of Indo-US relations is a difficult and complex subject and the more we focus on it the better. A writer once compared the totality of the Indo-US relationship to an iceberg in which the mass of friendly cooperative interactions involving a vast number of people in both countries remain largely unnoticed while the tip of mutual differences is there for all to see. Although Indo-US relations have improved considerably, I do not think we can say that this tip of mutual differences has melted. On many issues India and the US continue to remain far apart. However, by organising initiatives like this conference and focussing on the emerging facets of the new relationship between the world's two largest democracies, we should at least make the iceberg stand on its head. ■

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We do not believe in a rigid autarchy, but we do want to make India self-sufficient in regard to her needs as far as this is possible. We want to develop international trade, importing articles which we cannot easily produce and exporting such articles as the rest of the world wants from us. We do not propose to submit to the economic imperialism of any other country or to impose our own on others. We believe that the nations of the world can co-operate together in building a world economy which is advantageous for all and in this work we shall gladly co-operate. But this economy cannot be based on the individual profit motive, nor can it subsist within the framework of imperialist system. It means a new world order, both politically and economically, and free nations co-operating together for their own as well as the larger good.

Jawaharlal Nehru

(October 4, 1940)

Sah Brothers

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Manusmriti vs Indian Constitution ● *Chris Hani*

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EDITORIAL

A New Lease of Life

Two-and-a-half years ago on the eve of the Fifth Summit Meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) at Male, the capital of Maldives, the then Foreign Secretary of India, Muchkund Dubey, had made an observation of far-reaching significance that becomes all the more transparent in the wake of the latest SAARC Summit which has just concluded at Dhaka. Addressing the Foreign Secretaries of the seven South Asian states assembled at Male in preparation for the SAARC Summit there (November 21 to 23, 1990), the Indian Foreign Secretary had stated: "The SAARC will acquire a self-sustaining momentum only when hard core economic cooperation becomes integral to its activities." It was also noteworthy that at the Male Summit the then Prime Minister of India, Chandra Shekhar, had pointed to the new features acquired by the question of security in the post-Cold War era adding that the "contemporary world context itself demands intensified economic cooperation among South Asian countries".

As was noted in these columns on December 1, 1990 in an assessment of the Male Summit, ensuring genuine economic cooperation among member-states of the Association has all along been the "crux of the problem in the SAARC's endeavours to attain a viable character". Today it appears that—despite the pessimists' consistent refrain that the South Asian grouping remains nothing more than a talking shop wherein rhetoric overshadows action (a criticism which is based on solid evidence and hence cannot be just brushed aside)—the Association has eventually been able to set itself on a purposeful course to become an action-oriented institution capable of promoting mutually beneficial and fruitful economic interaction among its constituent members.

Perhaps it would be an exaggeration to use the term 'breakthrough' while analysing the results of the Seventh SAARC Summit at Dhaka (April 10-11, 1993) but none can deny that it marks a definite step forward in the direction of forging real economic linkages in South Asia. That is because for the first time since the Association was launched in December 1985, a conscious effort has been made to impart economic content to the SAARC.

At the Sixth SAARC Summit at Colombo (December 21, 1991) an inter-governmental group (IGG) was entrusted with the task of studying the Sri Lankan proposal for the establishment of a South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement (SAPTA). At that time it was felt that this Arrangement for reduced tariff barriers and liberalised trade among countries of the region could be implemented only by 1997. Later discussions revealed that there was broad agreement on completing all the formalities by the end of 1995 when it could be formally launched. Thus the Standing Committee of the SAARC Foreign Ministers was committed to "complete the (item-wise) schedule of concession by December 1993 and all formalities for operation of the SAPTA, including its ratification, as soon as possible thereafter, but well before December 1995". However, Pakistan's feet-dragging on the issue finally resulted in the agreement on the SAPTA being signed without spelling out any specific time-frame for its enforcement.

This has prompted some analysts to conclude that the agreement did not go beyond the usual rhetoric which has accompanied every SAARC meet. Such a conclusion would be fallacious. Pakistan tried but could not frustrate the signing of the SAPTA agreement. In fact, Nawaz Sharif, the Pakistan Premier, had expressed the view that the accord be signed only on completion of the schedule. This was turned down at Dhaka precisely due to the forceful intervention of Ranasinghe Premadasa, the Sri Lankan President (who had piloted the SAPTA project at Colombo in December 1991). Premadasa insisted that the agreement be concluded at the Seventh Summit itself so as to help initiate intra-regional trade cooperation as early as possible.

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ONE should study the subject in greater depth in order to get a full measure of whatever has been achieved. As a result of the accord signed at Dhaka, any two countries of the region can embark on bilateral liberalised trade among themselves. Pakistan wanted to postpone the signing of the agreement to prevent such a prospect. But ultimately it had to beat a retreat on finding itself isolated on the issue. And even if the time-frame has not been specified, the Arrangement agreed upon is actually time-bound: the negotiations on the tariff regime of products are to be completed by the end of this year; and the multilateral agreement on the schedule would be hammered out by the end of 1995. This is the plan which has been worked out and judging by the mood at the Dhaka Summit there is little to suggest that Pakistan would be able to reverse or alter it (even if one should not be oblivious of several imponderables on the path of reaching the objective). It is the deeprooted misgivings of Pakistan about Indian products swamping its market which are at the source of Islamabad's opposition to what our Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao, spelt out at the inaugural ceremony of the Dhaka Summit: to make every effort to "break down the trade barriers between our countries and jettison the irrational past which created and sustained these barriers". But Pakistan's moves have not borne any fruit: on the contrary, it was forced to sign the SAPTA agreement in the face of the Sri Lankan pressure. Also significant is the fact that a country like Bangladesh has likewise fallen in line as it stands to gain from the Arrangement: being one of the highest importers and a low exporter in the region Dhaka would find it considerably profitable to have liberalised trade with the other South Asian states.

Begum Khaleda Zia, the Bangladesh Prime Minister and the current Chairperson of the SAARC, has thus aptly described the SAPTA agreement and the decision to set up a South Asian Development Fund on an ad hoc basis through the establishment of an inter-governmental group (IGG) for the purpose as the most vital achievements of the Dhaka Summit. These would go a long way towards lending the much needed impetus to economic cooperation in South Asia within the SAARC framework regardless of whatever the cynics convey.

While guarding against any form of euphoria, the significance of the modest success of the Dhaka Summit must not be underestimated. The call to the member-states to enact enabling legislations at the national level to give effect to the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism (only Pakistan and Bangladesh have yet to adopt appropriate measures on this score) was also of substantive value. Moreover, the Summit's reiteration of the plea to evolve a coordinated action plan for countering terrorism, as well as controlling and suppressing drug trafficking and drug abuse; and its emphasis on specific steps to ensure child survival and development besides environmental protection and effective resolution of the problem of shelter were of no less importance.

Whatever the bilateral irritants in South Asia—and there is no gainsaying that Indo-Pak problems do cast a shadow on the smooth functioning of the SAARC (although New Delhi took pains this time to ensure that its diplomatic plain-speaking to Islamabad at the Summit did not adversely affect the outcome of the meet)—the Dhaka Summit has given a new lease of life to the Association and at long last paved the way for transforming the South Asian grouping into a viable organisation on the lines of the European Community and ASEAN.

April 13 *S.C.*

Signs of Change and Hope

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

In recent times, particularly during the last four months, the morale in public life has taken a nosedive, as unprecedented waves of senseless violence have swept over the country. The communal tension bursting out into killings, looting and arson, and then finally planned bombing have to a large measure shaken the people's faith in the machinery of governance itself.

There has been a dangerous slump of public confidence in politicians and in the system of polity itself. Even those who are elated at the disappearance of the Babri Masjid, will have to concede that the events of December 6 at Ayodhya amounted to an open defiance of the authority of the Supreme Court, the very judiciary whose verdict at the lower level they themselves are today pressing the executive to honour. The acrimonious polarisation between the Hindus and Muslims has been sharpened as never before since independence.

Discontent over contentious political issues have at places passed into the arena of armed militant action which, in turn, has strengthened the clamour for secession in some cases. The degeneration of the party system, saturated with corruption and rank opportunism, the blatant violation of the electoral laws and rules and unashamed use of muscle power, in short, open criminalisation of politics—there is no sign of any attempt at self-discipline by the leaders of political parties. Such cynical misuse of the political process, particularly the electoral system, has eroded to a considerable measure the common people's confidence in the democratic order. All these do add up to a rather fearsome scenario in which one tends to lose faith in the future of our country.

But is the situation really so utterly bleak and forbidding? Are there no redeeming features, no ray of hope? If one carefully surveys the prospect and takes into account the totality of present-day realities, one gets an objective assessment in which the positive factors, though not so palpable at the moment, are by no means inconsiderable.

Take the Hindu-Muslim tension. While undeniably the spurt of communal violence since December brought widespread devastation to thousands of innocent people, mostly in urban centres, Hindus and Muslims live side by side in more than five-and-a-half lakh villages of our vast country, as a respected Muslim leader pointed out to me after December 6. For decades and centuries, they have lived and toiled together; they have diverse ways of living, different food habits and clothes, observe different rituals and follow different faiths and yet they live in peace and with honour. This remarkable fact does not figure in our media nor in the perception of our political leaders. This asset is more enduring than the blood-soaked communal violence that erupts from time to time in some of the cities and towns. Here is the stable foundation of our democratic society which, if fostered with care, can become the best insurance against national disintegration.

What is perhaps equally significant is a new awakening in what is known as the silent majority of our democracy. The traditional concept of a concerned citizen is that he or she would be full of complaints about mismanagement of public affairs, sometimes breaking into demonstrations of anger or lodging complaints with the higher-ups in the officialdom. This image of passivity of the concerned citizen was definitely broken during the January disturbances in Bombay.

What was witnessed in Bombay during the January disturbances was that while the administration itself was in a state of semi-paralysis with lots of complaints about the conduct of the police, there was an extraordinary outburst of activities by individual citizens from different walks of life—a retired civil servant, a former Army General, a businessman or a doctor or a lawyer or a top dog from the advertisement world—all coming forward not only to help the victims of the communal fury but to provide sustained support for building up resistance to the pogrom of the minority community, which was particularly blatant in that city at the time.

Here one need mention the significant role played by a band of intrepid journalists whose courageous exposure of the pogrom helped to force the authorities to wake up—a splendid example of real investigative journalism, the media activism at its best.

The Bombay experience brought out that in terms of effective intervention in public affairs, the concerned citizen is emerging as a more significant factor in times of crisis than the formal party establishments. It is not just an accident that after the series of planned bomb blasts on March 12, the turn-out in the Bombay offices next day exceeded ninety per cent in contrast to the exodus of thousands after the January riots.

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THIS is not confined to Bombay alone. It was seen in New Delhi when the spontaneous upsurge of the citizens of the Capital, particularly the Bengali community, compelled the administration to hold back the local BJP's plans to demonstrate against the Bangladeshi immigrants which had provocative communal overtones and might have exploded into vicious communal disturbances. One can imagine many such cases of spontaneous local interventions by common citizens in different parts of the country going completely unreported since it does not fit into the stereotype of news in the mainstream media.

On a wider national canvas, these recent months of high-pitched communal tension have also seen a nationwide churning up against that danger itself. Never since the days preceding the partitioning of the country, the issue of communal danger has occupied the centre-stage of national politics. For years since independence, there was no mass campaign for Hindu-Muslim unity. In the little over five months that he survived after independence, Gandhiji had singlehandedly concentrated on a tireless mass contact campaign for Hindu-Muslim amity, but after his assassination even this was abandoned in the complacent belief that since India had repudiated the Muslim League's 'two-nation theory', there would be no need for such a campaign in independent India. Thanks to the *Sangh Parivar's* campaign in the last three years, that illusion has now disappeared and one can discern a nationwide movement at different levels to combat the menace of communalism.

Here is a strange and seemingly contradictory situation—on the one hand, the *Sangh Parivar's Hindutva* drive has accentuated the polarisation between the two communities; on the other hand, that very campaign of the *Sangh Parivar* has generated a counter-movement warning the country against the pernicious consequences of the *Sangh Parivar's* activity. Perhaps this is how dialectics works in the climactic phase of a political crisis. Here lies the new element in our national situation. What form this new stirring against communalism will take it is difficult to predict at this stage. The facile plea of some circles that this new awareness should lead to the formation of a united front of the Congress and other parties opposed to the BJP betrays the pursuit of the old, worn-out line of orthodox party politics in which public affairs were taken as coextensive with the activities of political parties, and subordinate to the latter. What we may be witnessing is the emergence of new forces which are *outside* the orbit of the conventional party establishments.

In this context the developments in the campus mood in Uttar Pradesh are significant. Since UP has been the main theatre of the *Sangh Parivar's* Ram campaign with Ayodhya as the focal point, one would have expected that the impact of the *kar seva* crusade would be more abiding here than anywhere else. Not only Ayodhya, but other targets like Mathura and Varanasi have already been marked out by the more bellicose among the *kar sevaks*. Under the circumstances, the conventional political calculation would be that the BJP and its fellow-travelling outfits would dominate the public life in the State, particularly when the Congress has so far been unable to regroup and consolidate its faction-ridden forces. But recent elections to the students' unions in five universities in UP have seen the spectacular trouncing of the ABVP, the student wing of the BJP-RSS, even from its classic bastion of Varanasi. And the ouster of the BJP has not led to the recovery of lost ground for the Congress, which has been equally badly mauled in these campus polls in UP. What is most extraordinary is that in three out of the five centres, the newly-formed Left-led All-India Students' Association has

(Continued on page 34)

Regional Cooperation in South Asia

ERIC GONSALVES

This winter has seen a stream of visitors—heads of government, senior officials, businessmen and academics—coming to Delhi from America, Japan and Western Europe. We have had to listen to one constant refrain from them, namely, how important it is to reduce tensions in South Asia and that confidence-building between India and Pakistan is central for this. Kashmir and the nuclear issue are placed high on the agenda.

With the end of the East-West confrontation and the consequent marginalisation of the developing world, the greater need for regional cooperation and defusing of local tensions is self-evident. Many in India accept the need to normalise relations with Pakistan and have been working hard to the pursuit of this objective. However, on reflection one wonders whether we are not brainwashing ourselves or allowing ourselves to be brainwashed into a dead end.

To get a steady forward momentum in Indo-Pakistan relations requires a confident political leadership that can carry the public with it. This does not obtain either in India or Pakistan. Rather, taking a hostile posture vis-a-vis the other country is often considered as more profitable by many sections of the leadership. In Pakistan the Establishment is in considerable disarray. Its security and intelligence agencies act independently of the government and covert transborder operations have become their staple diet. India too has to deal with the fractures within its own society. Nevertheless, we should not waver from the direction of normalising relations whatever the provocation from Pakistan, and of removing the causes they can exploit inside the country. However, we must also put more serious effort into other areas of regional cooperation. If improvement in Indo-Pak ties can reflect beneficially in the subcontinent, a general improvement in the climate of regional cooperation in South Asia would also make Pakistan more susceptible to cooperation. It is obvious that there is a fundamental difference between Indo-Pakistan relations, and those of India with her other neighbours. No perception of a security threat is there. After democracy was resurrected in them, the dialogue has become freer and more constructive. Problems remain but the challenge to resolve them is being faced with more realism within the SAARC, outside it and in bilateral fora. Ayodhya did cause some setback in Bangladesh—but even that seems largely behind us.

Almost since independence the barriers to economic interchange were virtually insurmountable. Now as various steps are being taken to globalise the economies in the region, the opportunities for investment and joint production are becoming evident and partnerships are being forged. Textiles, tea and rubber are some of the areas where joint ventures are being established. Much more is possible as governments and businessmen gain confidence and lower the hurdles established over the last half century.

Soon after independence some infrastructure projects were undertaken with Nepal. Though the concepts were sound mistakes crept into the implementation and the distrust grew in a climate of political tension. The history of sharing river waters with Bangladesh is equally full of distrust.

However, one of the most fruitful areas for cooperative endeavour does lie in harnessing the Eastern Himalayan river, the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna basin. These waters can provide badly needed inputs for the development of the poorest section of the subcontinent. Once progress begins here, many other constructive activities can flourish between India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan. Governments do not find it easy to take initiatives as they tend to become prisoners of earlier stands. Therefore, a number of NGOs and experts from Bangladesh, Nepal, India and from some of the donor countries and multilateral financial institutions decided to hold a workshop recently. The discussion was based around a book edited by B.G. Verghese and Ramaswamy R. Iyer entitled *Harnessing the Eastern Himalayan Rivers—Regional Cooperation in Asia*, produced under the auspices of the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi. This contains valuable material including some not

The author, a former Secretary in the External Affairs Ministry, was India's Ambassador in Brussels. On his retirement from the Foreign Service he was Director of the India International Centre, New Delhi for sometime.

hitherto available on most aspects of the problems and bringing in recent research done in newer disciplines such as Seismicity and Glaciology. The workshop made sufficient progress for the participants to decide to hold another meeting later this year where a framework for collaboration and a work programme could be finalised.

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THE need is to create adequate political will among the leadership and understanding and enthusiasm among the public. Concerned NGOs, the media and experts feel they should undertake an education campaign. Among the main ingredients should be the need to give priority to economic goals rather than political postures; the realisation that delay results in enormous escalation of costs; that there is a need for reliable data which can be accepted by all based on the transparency of requirement and collection; that the environment must be upgraded on the basis of Third World priorities of sustainable development and not First World eco-fundamentalism; that technical recommendations should be based on expertise and not coloured by narrow national considerations; that as no one can hope to win the entirety of their demands bargaining out a reasonable compromise is the only way forward; that India as the largest country has to be most generous, but this cannot mean concessions which leave the 370 million inhabitants of the Ganga basin (or sub-basin) in India substantially worse than their neighbours.

To achieve this objective, purposeful networking has first to be undertaken among the NGOs and technical institutions already working in the field. If necessary, regional institutions can be established or built up on those already existing. Where a need is perceived for foreign assistance either because of the expertise required or to provide confidence to the regional participants this should not be denied. In other words, we should proceed bilaterally, regionally, or multilaterally as best serves the particular project of programme. The goal could be to prepare a short-term work programme for a period of two to five years concentrating on socio-economic issues, technological issues and environmental issues. Once this gets underway and is accepted for implementation by governments, perspective plans for longer periods could be drawn up. Once the public at large recognises the value of the ideas put forward, the governments will have undertaken implementation. The Global Infrastructure Fund (GIF), a co-sponsor of the conference, provided an instance where their initiative had made possible a beginning in rehabilitation by multilateral action of the Aral Sea region in Central Asia.

The immense potential available in the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna basin would mean that even a 50-year perspective would be modest. China would have to be associated as progress is made.

If the time-frame is long, the resources required are also vast. Unfortunately, when there was enthusiasm in the World Bank community the local governments could not agree. Now the aid climate is far more stringent. However, all those who come to preach to us about stability should be willing to contribute if they are really serious. Moreover, all these projects will provide returns. The energy projects can become profitable in a fairly short time. So rather than wait to tie-up a master plan it would be best to proceed with those projects for which resources can be raised in the hope that efficient implementation will generate more resources for more projects. There are already considerable reservoirs of talent and industry in South Asia which can be tapped. It is also necessary to shed the old thinking that only governments can undertake such projects. Private sector groups in South Asia have a good track record. With collaboration from outside wherever necessary, they could add new perspectives and inputs.

Such transnational projects would succeed best if they are not seen as out of the ordinary. Once we forget the sovereign interest of governments and allow the management of such projects to follow economic and technical criteria as is done in Europe, etc. the more likely they are to do well. Power from Chukka in Bhutan is now fed into the East India grid. Nepal should be connected to the North Indian grid, and till the new power projects there are functioning, India should endeavour to provide their small shortfall. Energy network would bring natural gas, now underutilised, to industrial areas. Transport coordination, especially by inland waterways, could dramatically reduce costs and maximise production. Ultimately, one should be working towards a water and power grid and transport network for the whole of South Asia.

The experience of cooperation in Europe and North America cannot be transferred bodily to South Asia. But one clear lesson is there. As economic interdependence grows so does the need for political cooperation. ■

Growing Malfunctioning of Parliament in Present Setting

INDRAJIT GUPTA

The following is the G.V. Mavalankar Memorial Lecture delivered by the author, the CPI General Secretary and leader of the party group in the Lok Sabha with the longest tenure as a Member of the Lower House of Parliament. The lecture—"Decline in Parliamentary Standards and its Implication for the Future of Indian Democracy"—was delivered in New Delhi on March 30 at a meeting held under the auspices of the Institute for Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies. —Editor

Forty years after the First Lok Sabha was elected in 1952 under the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic, it is time to attempt an appraisal, however brief and incomplete, of Parliament's day-to-day functioning.

As one who has had the privilege of being elected to the House ten times since a 1950 bye-election (with a break from 1977 to 1980), I am venturing, perhaps like the proverbial fool, to rush in where angels fear to tread. It is rather in the nature of sharing a few thoughts with those who are interested in the subject.

I may assure all concerned that no offence, direct or indirect, is meant to anyone, least of all to those eminent personalities for whom I have nothing but the highest respect and regard. This applies not only to members but even more so, to the presiding officers, Parliamentary Affairs Ministers, the secretariat and the staff who have to perform their onerous duties under trying circumstances.

I will try to limit my observations to the conventions, standards and norms of conducting parliamentary proceedings, as they have been gradually evolving. This evolution has been predominently spontaneous rather than pre-planned. Many de-facto developments have taken place which are not strictly defined within the venerable "Rules of Procedure" but are an inevitable reflection of the changing social, economic and political environments within which we all have to function.

Above all, the Houses of the Indian Parliament are the progeny of the Indian electoral system whose admitted defects cannot but be reflected in the character of Parliament itself and of its members. Electoral reforms have become a crying necessity if the institution of Parliament is to project a high level of national consciousness, discipline, devotion to public morality, a willingness to listen to contrary views, and a readiness for political accommodation and adjustment, without the latter being allowed to degenerate into sheer opportunism.

But electoral reforms being outside the scope of today's subject, I confine myself to the question: whether the norms and standards of functioning of Parliament, as perceived by the public at large, are contributing to an enhancement of its credibility, or to the opposite.

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ACCORDING to a former Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha:

> If the Houses of Parliament cease to be forums of debate and deliberation of national issues, if alternative approaches on crucial matters cannot be freely and seriously discussed and solutions hammered out openly on the floor of the House, what is the relevance of Parliament?

He further continues:

> That the Opposition members would oppose and heckle and miss no opportunity to embarass the Government and make its smooth functioning difficult, is only to be expected. But, even when the members of the ruling party join the fray, demonstrate before the presiding officers' seat, and become parties to creation of uncontrollable disorder, uproar and lawlessness making it impossible for their own Government to transact business smoothly and compelling frequent adjournments, there is something fundamentally wrong somewhere, which demands serious thinking. If Parliament does not function, the constitutional machinery is going to fail. Who is to be responsible for this national disaster?

These expressions of agonised reappraisal by a former distinguished Secretary-General do not, however, answer the implied inference that the parliamentary system, structure, rules, etc. have an inbuilt propensity for unleashing scenes of disorder and pandemonium. Clearly, such a conclusion is not tenable.

In any case, gone are the days of 25 years or more ago, when the great majority of vocal members consisted of lawyers, professionals, academics, businessmen, landlords and others with a background of university education, "men of substance" one might say, whose conduct on the floor was prim and proper, never disorderly and uproarious, who meticulously observed the Rules and made the debates and discussions informative and educative, if somewhat boring.

If Parliament is really tending, as some commentators claim, to become more a forum of confusion than of debate, more a shouting match between political opponents than its original aspiration to be seen as the "grand inquest of the nation" as a whole, perhaps the explanation has to be sought, firstly, in the changed social composition of the membership and its growing trend away from men of substance to "men of the soil", and, secondly, in an inadequate appreciation of the vital roles to be expected from the Speaker, the Leader of the House, the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, the various Party and Group Leaders, and the floor managers.

It is interesting to note that in the course of paying tribute to the talents and qualities of the first Speaker of the Lok Sabha, G.V. Mavalankar, the veteran and seniormost of our members, Prof N.G. Ranga, himself a model of parliamentary discipline and conscientiousness, has observed:

> He came to invest the Parliamentary Affairs Minister with special status and importance vis-a-vis the Cabinet and the leaders of all political parties in Parliament. Speakership, thus, was raised to the political pinnacle of parliamentary supremacy. Unfortunately, several speakers......have not thought it fit to maintain Mavalankar's practice. Some Speakers have even come to be accused of bowing to the convenience of Cabinets and so, perhaps, they have failed to gain and demand the respectful observance of their rulings, exhortations or suggestions. No wonder then that the proceedings of Parliament and State Assemblies are now more like hectic disorderly verbal exchanges.

Here, Prof Ranga is appreciating the convention practiced by Mavalankar of avoiding having to go to the Prime Minister for consultation and, instead of using the good offices of the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs to initiate consultations, whenever necessary, with individual Ministers or groups of them. Clearly, Mavalankarji acted on his own initiative—there was nothing prescribed in the book of Rules on this point.

Again, Prof Ranga has shrewdly observed:

> Speakers who succeeded Mavalankarji and Ananthasayanam Ayyangar have had to be contented with no more than seven to ten starred Questions to be answered. So, the Question Hour has lost so much of its interest, both to the Press and the Galleries, not to speak of the House. This fall in the political interest in the Question Hour is perhaps due to the growing weakness of the Chair and Ministers as well as to the impetuous and inconsiderate soloism being displayed by some of the new class of members.

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A major contributory factor to unruly proceedings in the House, one which has come to stay and yet, curiously enough, does not at all figure in the Rules of Procedure, is the Zero Hour. It emerged and developed in the years after the Mavalankar era and won de-fecto recognition from Speaker after Speaker until today it has become a bug bear for every Speaker or presiding officer. Today some belated efforts are being made to subject the Zero Hour to some sort of regulation by consultation and consensus among the Speaker, party leaders, and whips. Norms and standards of past years have proved inadequate so far to "control" it. It is truly a testing time for the Chair.

The positive aspects of the Zero Hour are its liveliness, the opportunity provided by it to members to raise urgent matters of national or international importance without giving prior notice, and the great interest it undoubtedly evokes in the public mind and the media.

The negative aspects are the competitiveness among members to raise their issues simultaneously, thereby inevitably adding to the volume of sound; attempts to raise local issues which have to be disallowed; failure to elicit any reply or response from the Ministers to the points raised; and the tendency to prolong the Zero Hour excessively, thus encroaching on other pending items of important business.

The only solution lies in working out a mutually agreed code of "dos" and "don'ts" for the Zero Hour, its scrupulous observance by all concerned, and the persistent initiatives of the Speaker in this respect. At any rate, the annual consideration of Demands for Grants of various Ministries, as well as Private Members' Business, should never be permitted to become the casualties of an uncontrolled Zero Hour, failing which, Parliament's functions would be disastrously weakened.

An integral part of the institution of Parliament is its coverage by the Press. The importance of this has not been at all reduced by the recent introduction of the short capsule of the Question Hour proceedings every morning on the TV. This is still inadequate to handle the information generated in Parliament. There can be no effective substitute for a well-informed, discerning, priority-conscious and objective Press coverage of the proceedings at least by the major and widely circulated dailies and weeklies, both in English and the vernacular languages.

Although the number of such dailies and weeklies has multiplied several fold, can it be claimed that the standards and traditions of factual reporting have also improved? Or are they also declining?

The Press is usually present in full strength in the gallery during the Zero Hour, but lends to concentrate on only one or two of the points raised by agitated members, ignores the rest, and frequently blacks-out even the observations of the Chair while responding to the members.

The Press gallery is also well-attended during the Question Hour. One would have expected a reasonably good coverage of starred questions in the next day's papers. But one can never be sure. However, whenever there is some commotion during discussion on a particular starred question, arising out of some sensational allegations or counter-allegations and noisy trading of charges across the floor, it is duly highlighted by the Press.

As for Private Members' Business, no doubt an overwhelming majority of members themselves are absent in the House on Friday afternoons as they get busy preparing to leave Delhi for their weekend visits to their constituencies. But it seems that for the Press, Private Members' Business is zero business.

The growing vociferouness of members, especially the backbenchers, is not a bad thing in itself. It can, and often does, go beyond limits when the exasperation and frustration of members come up against a seeming stonewall of ministerial unresponsiveness, where floor mismanagement by Party Leaders and Whips adds to the confusion, incursions into the well of the House ignore all admonitions and pleas, leading inevitably to holding up proceedings followed by adjournments for a longer or shorter period.

Statistics reveal that whereas members went into the well 12 times during the Eighth Lok Sabha, they did so on 24 occasions during the Ninth Lok Sabha. The trend is clear and should be taken by all of us as a warning, calling for corrective action while there is still time. The complexities of a fast-moving political situation are bound to find expression, albeit in a distorted form, within the House.

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ANOTHER major factor in managing the affairs of the House should be the active role of the Leader of the House who, in the case of the Lok Sabha, is usually the Prime Minister himself. Despite all the pressures of work and his multifarious engagements, he must make his presence felt in the House, must intervene when necessary, must respond to important submissions made by leaders of Opposition parties, must encourage discussion of important policy matters, must come to the assistance of his ministerial colleagues, if necessary.

Jawaharlal Nehru was a model of what a Leader of the House should be, perhaps because of his deep commitment to parliamentary values and standards. He even made it a point to attend the House daily during the Question Hour, listened attentively to the proceedings and did not hesitate to help out another Minister who was having difficulties in replying.

His successors have unfortunately failed to maintain his standards. Prolonged absences from the House by the Prime Minister, even during periods of intense pressure on the Treasury Benches and their obvious discomfiture, do create an impression of indifference towards the proceedings. This can have a negative fall-out, especially when single-party majority rule at the Centre and in the States is gradually on the way out—a very different scenario to that which prevailed in the days of Jawaharlal and Speaker Mavalankar.

Prof Ranga has been constrained to point out that:

> the Prime Minister's contacts with MPs are growing less and less, and the lack of frequent communication and consultation between him and the leaders of Opposition parties including the Whips and secretaries of all parties is weakening parliamentary control over the administration......If the growing tendencies of the gigantic administration towards arbitrary functioning is to be controlled, the Prime Minister and the Parliament should realise the urgency for mutual cooperation through high level consultation and conference.

The functions of the Leader of the House have to be discharged by setting up and following conventions, not by reference to written Rules.

These functions since they are emanating from the Prime Minister, have a political priority of their own, they cannot be subsitutted by interventions, however competent, by junior Ministers or the Cabinet Minister for Parliamentary Affairs.

Again, it is the Leader of the House who could make parliamentary debates more meaningful by arranging for official briefings of MPs on important Bills, or for informal discussions between groups of MPs, including those from the Opposition, and the bureaucrats in charge. This, apart from better informed participation, would enhance the role of the backbenchers.

The functions of the Consultative Committees attached to different Ministries require to be considerably enlarged. Their work could be made more productive if they were provided with detailed background papers and fact-sheets on issues coming up for legislation. This is essential to help members with their own home work. Regrettably, the quality of the majority of debates on Bills is poor testimony to the work of the party whips and secretaries. More often than not, the speakers are ill-prepared, coordination is poor, attendance is thin. Such an image of Parliament is hardly likely to enhance its credibility.

The ministerial attitude to giving information, with few exceptions, is negative. This is revealed both during Question Hour, as well as in the government's apparent lack of concern for the number of Ministries whose Demands for Grants get guillotined every year for "lack of time". This trend has grown over the years. In the Budget session of 1992-93, even the Demands of the Ministry of Defence totalling over Rs 1700 crores (the largest of any Ministry) had to be passed without discussion. Thus, large sums from the Consolidated Fund of India are being voted without discussion and without scrutiny of the previous year's performance. The lack of sense of urgency is becoming more and more palpable.

Important policy issues including the Five Year Plans and Economic Surveys, the official Resolutions on Industrial Policy, Agricultural Policy, Science and Technology Policy, Environment Policy, Foreign Policy, National Cultural Policy, etc. are hardly ever taken up for discussion in the House. If this trend is not arrested, the relevance of Parliament will be further downgraded. But it is still possible to retrieve the position provided policy matters are restored to the priority status they enjoyed 20 or 25 years ago.

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IN a period when the standards and content of parliamentary debates are falling in quality, the beginning of some sort of meaningful efforts to improve the functioning of the institution and to enrich its participatory character are welcome.

One such initiative is presently under way, and it has been decided to set up joint parliamentary Subject Committees of both Houses entrusted with the task of detailed and in-depth scrutiny of the Demands for Grants of various Ministries, including examination of their plans, projects, long-term policies and actual performances during each budgetary year.

Embodied within the Rules of Procedure, these Committees are expected to report back to the House, alongwith their recommendations for final disposal by the vote of the House (that is, the Lok Sabha) after a general discussion. The composition of the proposed Committees (17 in all and each of 45 members) should enable the active participation in their work of over 750 members of both the Houses. This should help also to allay the grievances of the backbenchers who often feel left out of the proceedings in the plenary sessions.

Thus, the introduction for the first time in the Indian Parliament, of a purposeful Committee System (as distinct from the Consultative Committees which have been functioning for years but as toothless tigers) is a radical innovation in our procedures and practices. It should give the members the opportunity to equip themselves better for handling the subjects (Ministries) of their own choice. It would, above all, free the Budget discussions from the constraints of the guillotine, and enable the Demands for Grants of practically all Ministries to be studied and discussed by at least the 45 members constituting each Joint Committee.

Whether such Committees can, in due course, evolve new standards and new norms which will eventually become a part of our parliamentary conventions remains to be seen.

A firm stand should be taken against the "headlines" mentality which actuates many members to only raise issues of a 'sensational' or scandal-related nature and to look up at the Press galleries while speaking. Unfortunately, Parliament has no control over our free Press which also often distorts priorities in its news coverage and puts a premium on the fare which appeals to the shallower tastes of their readers.

Regrettably, the composition of the legislative bodies both at the Centre and even more so in the States cannot but reflect an electoral system and electoral malpractices which are increasingly being dictated to by money power and muscle power, and by considerations of casteism and communalism.

This had led one cynic to remark that "it is better to select an illiterate candidate who will succeed rather than a person of high merit who runs the risk of losing because of his secular outlook".

The implication of this jibe is, of course, that merit is commensurate with the degree of education, but such an oversimplified definition would prove invalid in today's society where millions of poor, unemployed, and deprived sections might justifiably prefer to vote for the illiterate, not because of his caste or community, but because he is a sincere and dedicated grass-root fighter for the people's cause. And what guarantee is there that a person of high educational merit will be free of the communal or casteist virus?

The multi-party parliamentary form of government has taken root in India because, firstly, it is the product of the Indian people's struggle for independence from colonial rule, and secondly, because its pivotal role is generally accepted in maintaining the unity and integrity of such a vast, multi-religious, multi-lingual, multi-cultural country with different levels of development in its various regions.

Prophets of doom forecast that the remarkable survival record of our Parliament is now approaching its end and point, as evidence, to its eroded credibility among the people and its growing dys-functionalism. This trend cannot be denied and it is a disquieting one, but it is the common responsibility of all of us to nurture the plant of parliamentary democracy enshrined in the Constitution, to cleanse it of the man-made imperfections and impurities which have penetrated into its working, and to restore it to the vibrant and purified role which befits the "temple of democracy". ■

Journey to Darkness

A December 6, 1992 Experience

S.B.

Our family of four was returning to Ahmedabad from Sikkim. We were waiting at the Lucknow station since morning for the connecting night train. It was the fateful Sixth of December. Our train was the Sabarmati Express, and it was coming via Ayodhya just after the Babri Masjid demolition. The train arrived two hours late. We rushed to our 'reserved' compartment, and were shocked to find it was fully occupied by *kar sevaks*. Its surface was covered by slogans (*Jai Sri Ram, ban gaya kam*) and the doors were plastered with BJP posters. We fought our way to our numbered berths and asked the men sleeping on them to please vacate. They not only refused, but threatened us without even lifting their shawls.

> We are coming after breaking the Babri Masjid. Better get lost, otherwise the train will not move an inch from here!

None of them had a ticket, leave alone reservations. We went to the TC, but his response was:

> Don't you see these are *kar sevaks*? You may have reservations, but so what?

There was a policeman too, but he took off without a word to the illegal occupants. It was midnight and the train was jampacked. We didn't know where to go, and we had two frightened and tired kids. I realised the pointlessness of pressing my rights. I prompted my wife to intervene in her language—Gujarati. (The Ahmedabad bogie's load of *kar sevaks* were all Gujaratis.) This worked, and we were permitted to squeeze in. All other reserved passengers, with their luggage and children were ordered out, to find another compartment or stay back in the biting cold of the Lucknow platform. That done, the doors were latched from inside.

The *kar sevaks* were young, middle-class males, almost all from Ahmedabad and Baroda. They said they belonged to the 'Bajrang Dal'. They guffawed loudly about the Masjid demolition. According to them, it was well-planned. A *mahurat* was set and the "party" had taken care of everything. At the site, there was hardly any police to stop them. They were given free food, and asked to utilise any train for free. A small party-slip was their passport to such favours. They carried special photo-albums of earlier *kar sevas*, with portraits of L.K. Advani and Kalyan Singh. Each of them carried back souvenirs: a brick of the broken mosque, an iron rod of the structure, or a bottle of water from the river Sarayu.

The compartment had no police protection, which came instead from hefty *dadas*. One of them came to me and menacingly ordered me to get out. I was terrified. Fortunately, by then we had made sufficient acquaintance through our Gujarati connection to have him leave us alone. After this terrifyingly long halt, the train lurched forward and our journey began. We heaved a sigh of relief.

I could not sleep that night. When morning came, men in the compartment bought newspapers and rejoiced at photos of the demolition. They searched for their own faces, talking and posing like heroes. No passenger was allowed into the compartment that day. The train ran at the will of the *kar sevaks*. Whenever they wanted a halt, they simply pulled the chain. Once at a tiny station the train stopped for no apparent reason. It made a couple of attempts to start, but these were in vain. It turned out that one of 'our' *kar sevaks* could not find his brand of bidis on the platform. So off he went to market, while his colleagues held up the train for him. He shouted defiance when questioned on his return.

I noticed an old rustic woman in the group, and was curious as to how she found herself in the demoliton group. She replied:

> Why not? I will go like this to Mathura and Benaras also in future, just as the BJP says. I could never have made pilgrimage to Ayodhya on my own. Now, the party-walas took care of everything: *aana, jaana, khana, peena, subkuchh.*

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TENSION was mounting as the day progressed, with reports reaching each station of new outbreaks of violence. Meal services were suspended along the line. Till midnight nothing drastic happened. Then, the calm was suddenly shattered by a big stone which came into the moving train, shattering a window glass with a loud noise. It was pitch dark outside. I woke up with a start. There was commotion everywhere. The others said there may be bloody fighting, so I had better shift the children to upper berths. The stoning was quickly assumed as the act of Muslims, and we should get ready for an attack. The *kar sevaks* took out their equipment of hockey sticks, iron rods, bricks and lathis. I saw a couple of *khukris* (the deadly Gurkha dagger) in their hands. All shutters were pulled down, and latched tightly. The door latch was rammed shut with a stone. Even the toilet doors were latched tight and one or two armed men stood at every door and window. Terror-stricken, we huddled the children on the top berths, covering them totally. With fervent prayer, we waited for the attack. Whenever the train slowed down and stopped at a station, my heart nearly stopped. It was a very long night.

Next morning, December 8, I noticed police at major stations. Although the newspaper reports were alarming, the police uniforms offered the protective myth of police security. We entered Gujarat. Many of our *kar sevaks* got down at Baroda. The others were given instructions from the party organisers that they should slip off before the train stopped on the platforms. When we reached Maninagar station at Ahmedabad, a big crowd welcomed the 'heroes' of our compartment. There was an announcement through a portable mike that all *kar sevaks* should disembark there, and not go on to Ahmedabad Central as trouble had broken out at that station.

The compartment was soon deserted. The train finally reached Ahmedabad at 1.30 PM, delayed by many hours. Hardly a dozen passengers alighted from the Express. There were no porters. We ran outside, agreeing to whatever fare the rickshaw driver demanded. We were free from the prison of our compartment, but could we recognise the India to which we had travelled through our dark journey? I was an infant when freedom came in 1947. What answers would I offer now to my children's questioning? ■

Sukhamoy Chakravarty on Development Strategy

C.H. HANUMANTHA RAO

It is clear from the writings of Prof Sukhamoy Chakravarty during the eighties that he was not happy about the way the development strategy adopted in the early fifties unfolded itself, although he did not think that there was anything basically wrong, in principle, in the strategy adopted. From the experience of the working of the Indian economy he saw the unrealistic nature of some of the critical assumptions underlying this strategy such as those relating to agrarian transition, resource mobilisation and character of the state. He was explicit about the need for modifying this strategy in the light of the realities of the Indian situation.

His recent writings bring out that the expansion of home demand should be central to the modified strategy. His emphasis on agriculture represents a significant modification of the earlier thinking based on the working of the command economies. Together with this, the accent on poverty alleviation programmes and on public investment in general are designed to widen and deepen the home market.

Sukhamoy Chakravarty thought that the complex regulatory framework administered by an overloaded bureaucracy in India never formed part of the core of the development strategy but was largely an inheritance of the war economy. In his view, where the early policy-makers went wrong was in their grossly oversimplified view of the agrarian structure and its possible consequences for accelerated industrialisation; their naive expectation in regard to the transfer of resources into the hands of the state; and the failure to ensure people's participation in development in rural areas.

The combined result of these developments was that while the tax-to-income ratio has increased, the relative share of direct taxes diminished drastically. As a consequence, a system of indirect taxation towards taxing a few 'universal intermediates' has emerged resulting in high-cost economy and greater inequity. The deficiency in public revenues led to the large volume of deficit financing to finance public outlays.

The way out of the crisis can be found either in political determination to collect taxes and service charges such as electricity and water rates or alternatively 'privatisation' of public investment outlays. However, the 'privatisation' alternative was unworkable, according to him, as it affected investments in key sectors like energy, irrigation, transport and communications, and expenditure on health and education. He, therefore, thought that the state did have an important role to play in both raising the accumulation ratio as well as in directing investment flows into areas of long-term significance.

Sukhamoy Chakravarty's emphasis on expanding home demand arose from his fear that India was unlikely to emerge as a major exporter, especially in respect of manufacturing exports, for three main reasons: first, the vast size of the non-tradeable sectors which were posing major problems of management even for meeting home demand; second, limits to reducing efficiency wages for generating adequate export competitiveness; and third, uncertainty as to the consequences of technological changes in the world economy for the international division of labour.

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THE recent changes in exchange rate policies may result in easing some of these constraints but the observations made by Sukhamoy Chakravarty regarding the need for improvements in the management of the non-tradeable sectors, proper assessment of the consequences of technological changes in the world economy as

The author is a distinguished economist and former Member of the Planning Commission. This contribution consists of his observations made on the occasion of the release of Sukhamoy Chakravarty's posthumous book, Selected Economic Writings *(Oxford University Press, 1983, pp. 591, Rs 490), held in New Delhi (March 29, 1993).*

also the prospects for growth in world trade are extremely relevant even today for sizing up the role for export promotion in India's development strategy.

He thought that involving people in the development process which, in his view, was much more demanding than finding new technologies should become an important ingredient of the development strategy. Expanding education in the widest sense of the term and achieving newer modes of integrative behaviour were, according to him, essential to successfully tackle the tasks in the eighties relating to poverty eradication.

Sukhamoy Chakravarty rejected the mobilisation route for agriculture followed by the command economies in favour of productivity raising solution through the modifications in Plan priorities. He disagreed with the view that agricultural output can be increased with very little extra investment. He advocated sizeable public investment in irrigation and agricultural research; and improvement in the performance of existing major irrigation works as well as power stations. The Economic Advisory Council then headed by him lent a powerful support to the Planning Commission during the Sixth and Seventh Plan periods in reorienting the agricultural strategy on the above lines. Although the investment in irrigation has slowed down, there is a significant pick-up in the growth of foodgrains output, particularly rice, during the eighties, the performance in the eastern region being higher than the national average; and there is a significant diversification of oilseeds output.

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As Sukhamoy Chakravarty points out in the prologue to his book, he was inspired, when he was still a graduate student, by the exercises of the first two Five Year Plans. He was motivated to choose Investment Planning as a subject for his doctoral work because he was fired with the ambition to contribute his bit as an economist to the process of development in India. He was thus intensely involved in the Indian planning process both as a concerned observer and as an active participant since the adoption of 'inward-looking', 'import-substituting' development strategy to the days when measures for the liberalisation of the economy were initiated. He also saw the emergence of the current fiscal crisis and gave his recommendations to the government on these problems, as the Chairman of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister.

It is clear from his writings on Development Strategy in India, that he did not see anything basically wrong with the strategy followed so far as, in his view, it was dictated by the size of the country and the needs for self-reliant and equitable development. He thought that avoidance of a large debt burden, moderate rates of inflation and sizeable increase in domestic rates of saving were among the favourable dimensions of the development strategy followed. However, he felt that the planners could not foresee certain consequences of development pursued within a highly stratified society through the democratic process. Population explosion, slow agrarian transition and the rise of pressure groups, bureaucratisation in the management of public undertakings and the inability to mobilise resources are some such consequences. According to him, policies for raising exports, technological upgradation of basic industries, expanding home market by stepping up public investment in agriculture and in infrastructure in general in the less developed areas are some necessary correctives to the strategy followed so far.

Sukhamoy Chakravarty did feel the need to improve the system of incentives by redefining the role of the state in relation to markets but was firmly of the view that India cannot opt for a strategy of minimal state intervention, as the state has still to play an important role for promoting equitable development by facilitating accumulation, by pre-empting resources for investment in essential infrastructure including human development and by speeding up agrarian transition. ■

Manusmriti versus Constitution of India

YOGINDER SIKAND

Having torn down the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya, the next target of the demolition squad of the *Hindutva* brigade is the very Constitution of India itself. The *Hindutvawadis* have now declared that the supposedly 'anti-Hindu' Constitution should immediately be scrapped. They contend that the basic cause of all the myriad problems that India has to contend with is the present Constitution itself.

The Sant-Samiti of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, at its meeting of October 13-14, 1992, had set up a four-member committee to rework the 'anti-Hindu' Consitution. The team, headed by 'Swami' Muktananda Saraswati, has issued a draft of their criticism of the Constitution, which has the long, yet revealing, title of "*Who is responsible for destroying India's Unity and Integrity, Brotherhood and Communal Harmony? Who is responsible for increasing Hunger, Poverty, Corruption and Irreligiousness* (adharma)*?—The present Indian Constitution.*"[1]

The present Constitution enshrines, albeit imperfectly, the principles of Democracy, Equality, Social Justice and Secularism. It is precisely these principles which the fascist *Hindutva* brigade is vehemently opposed to, as its hidden purpose it to revive and restore the old system of rigid Brahminism and caste inequality. It finds the present Constitution as the main stumbling-block in its way, and hence demands that it should be scrapped. To justify this demand, and garner support for its evil designs, it projects the Constitution as being totally against the interest of the masses.

According to Muktananda, "the entire Constitution itself is anti-people".[2] This would make the democratic provisions that have been made for women, backward castes and the poor in the Constitution as also 'anti-Hindu' in the eyes of its fierce opponents. By projecting the Indian Constitution as the fundamental cause of hunger and unemployment, the fascist forces seek to mobilise the support of the poverty-stricken masses in their all-out war against democracy. Muktananda, for instance, employs radical socialist jargon to portray his anti-democratic assault as a crusade for social justice, but the fact is that the essential thrust of the *Hindutva* brigade is precisely to maintain and further solidify the structures of extreme social and economic oppression.

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The RSS has consistently sought to win over the "lower" castes to its cause, for it needs them for being used as cannon-fodder in its anti-muslim pogroms. Yet, Muktananda declares that the Dalits, tribals and backward castes should not be granted any reservations in government services nor any other from of special treatment, on the flimsy ground that, "this would breed the feeling of separatism".[3] He conveniently ignores the inconvenient fact that it is precisely the Brahminical system, of which he is the most ardent champion, that has separated society into literally thousands of mutually opposed castes. Referring to the tribals, he asserts: "Only those rights of the tribals should be protected which nature has granted them."[4] Apparently, he wishes to see the tribals lost forever in the dense, wild jungles, never to be allowed to participate in the governance of the country.

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THE Sant-Samiti's document denounces both the Indian flag and the national anthem. Muktananda declares: "That flag which is referred to as the natinal flag has an Ashoka Chakra, because of which it smells of Imperialism."[5] It appears more likely that his hostility towards the Ashokan-Buddhist Dhamma Chakra is because it is a symbol of the Buddhist values of love, equality and brotherhood, values that the *Sangh Parivar* is absolutely allergic to.

Muktananda castigates the Constitution for not having made a Uniform Civil Code mandatory. Thus, in an interview to the fortnightly *Frontline* (January 29, 1993), he asserts: "There should be uniform laws for everybody." Yet, in the same breath, he contradicts himself by declaring: "The state should not interfere in religious and personal matters. There should be no laws regarding marriage."

If the state should not lay down laws regarding marriage and other personal matters, laying down a Uniform Civil Code is inconceivable since civil codes deal essentially with personal, family matters. If the state were to be ruled by the likes of Muktananda and were, therefore, not to interfere in religious and personal matters, obnoxious practices like untouchability, *sati* and child marriage would not be outlawed. The present Constitution has banned these cutoms, and perhaps this is one of the reasons why Muktananda has branded it as *adharmik* (irreligious).

The *Hindutva* brigade projects the Muslim Personal Law as a sign of 'Muslim-appeassement', yet it advocates the Hindu law, based essentially on the *Manusmriti*, for all Hindus, if not for all Indians. In fact, it is perhaps even willing to grant Muslims their own personal laws, if, in turn, Hindus are allowed to be ruled by the *Manusmriti*. As the BJP Vice-President, K.R. Malkani, observes in his book, *The RSS Story*,

> Shri Guruji (Golwalkar, the RSS supremo) went so far as to say that Muslim Law could continue separately, without being replaced by a Uniform Civil Law, as laid down in the Directive Principles of State Policy. When subsequently asked whether uniformity of law would not promote national integration, he said, "Not necessarily."[6]

On the other hand, Malkani also reveals that:

> He (Golwalkar) saw no reason why Hindu law should break its ancient links with the *Manusmriti*.[7]

It appears, therefore, that the real, albeit hidden, motive of the *Sangh Parivar* in demanding the scrapping of the Constitution, is to replace it by the *Manusmriti*. The *Manusmriti* sanctifies the rigidly hierarchical and oppressive Brahminical system, and advocates the inhuman oppression of Shudras, women, Dalits and free-thinkers, well over 95 per cent of the Indian population. Not only the Muslims but, in fact, the overwhelming majority of the Indian people would suffer immensely in the *Manuite Hindu Rashtra*.

It may be argued that with the exit of Golwalkar from the scene, the enthusiasm of the RSS for the *Manusmriti* has mellowed down somewhat. That the BJP Government of Himachal Pradesh squandered lakhs on the renovation of the Manu Temple at Manali is merely one indicator that this is far from being true. A report in the RSS weekly *Organiser* (May 10, 1992) entitled, "Hindu Advocates Demand the Rewriting of the Constitution to Remove Discrimination Against the Hindus and Preserve Bharat as the Hindu Homeland", states:

> The second State Hindu Advocates' Conference, organised by the VHP at Madurai on April 18 and 19, has demanded the rewriting and redrafting of the Constitution... Shri V.K.S. Chaudhari, Advocate-General of UP, in his key-note address... asserted that the *Manusmriti* rendered justice for all. Manu took the entire mankind and its needs for ages and evolved his Code. *Manusmriti* was for all times and ages, and for all mankind.

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THE message is clear. The Constitution needs to be scrapped and replaced by Manu's Brahminical Code. Obviously, the *Sangh Parivar* cannot reveal its true intentions at this juncture, for then the victims of Manu—over 95 per cent of the Indian population—would see through the nefarious game of the RSS and would actively oppose it. Hence, it seeks to rally them behind it by declaring that the present Constitution is the source of all their woes. Not surprisingly, Muktananda's booklet consists solely of a host of imaginary and only partially genuine defects in the Constitution, camouflaged in seemingly socialistic, radical rhetoric, with absolutely no mention of the details of the new Constitution that the *Sangh Parivar* would impose if ever it manages to grab power.

The Hindu fascists are intensely hostile to the principles of democracy. Laws made by governments elected by the masses are anathema to them. Laws can only be laid down by the Brahmin priests. Thus, according to the *Pioneer* (December 4, 1992), the General Secretary of the VHP, Ashok Singhal, has asserted: "What our *dharmacharyas* pronounce as *dharma*, we will also accept as law." The *Shankaracharyas* are said to be the leading *dharmacharyas*. The Puri *Shankaracharya* had proclaimed the caste-system, untouchability and *sati* as integral parts of *dharma*. Obviously these inhuman practices would be resuscitated in Singhal's proposed *Hindu Rashtra*. The Paramacharya of the Kanchi Peeth proclaims that the *Manusmriti*, being the basic source of Hindu law, should form the corner-stone of the ideal Hindu state.

Writing in *Bhavan's Journal* (November 30, 1989), the Kanchi pontiff nostalgically recalls the days of unadulterated Brahminical rule. He states:

> What in this respect was unique in the olden days was that basic to all our administratioon there was the *Dharmashastra* functioning, as it were, as the Constitution for the whole country. Of all the *Dharmashastras*, the *Manu Dharmashastra* is said to have provided clear, specific guidance to the kings or yore... None of the kings attempted to change the rules laid down in the *Manu Dharmashastra*—rules presenting the essence of *Dharmashastras* propounded by selfless *rishis*. There was no question of any amendment to such rules.[8]

He goes on to suggest that the *Manusmriti* still has relevance today and stridently opposes the modernists since "they believe that our way of life according to the *Shastra* requires to be reformed to suit the times".[9]

The Kanchi high-priest voices his strong condemnation of democracy, arguing that only the relatively well-off should have the right to vote. He asserts:

> It is better to have these representatives elected by those who have had some education, some property and some sense of responsibility to understand the political currents and cross-currents and thus acquire a qualification to exercise their votes. The qualification for voting must not be confined to particular caste, religion and economic status, but must combine all these aspects.[10]

The last sentence possibly suggests that only well-off Hindu 'upper' castes should have the right to vote.

Similarly, in his proposed *dharmik* set-up, not everybody will have the right to stand for election. He says that candidates should have four qualifications—they should be revenue-paying owners of land, should own a house, should be between 30 and 60 years of age, and most importantly, should be well-versed in the *Dharmashatras*. While the first two conditions effectively deny the poor the right to stand for election, the last qualification restricts that right solely to the Brahmins, who alone, according to the *Shastras*, have the right to study them.

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MUKTANANDA is no less vehement in his ooposition to democracy. He writes:

> Rules by representatives is a very expensive and back-breaking system for a poor country like India.[11]

Yet, to conceal his hostility towards democracy, he projects the democratic provisions of the Constitution as the source of all corruption, so as to win public support for his anti-democratic crusade. He is equally against the basic pillars of democracy. Thus, he declares:

> In Section 5 of the Constitution (Articles 52-151), there are five chapters (a) Legislature; (b) Parliament; (c) The Powers of the President; (d) The Judiciary of the Union; (e) The Comptroller and Auditor General of India. The articles contained in these five chapters have absolutely no relationship whatsoever with the Indian context.[12]

It is also well worth-noting that the Kanchi Pope, like many other ideologues of *Hindutva*, glorifies the old monarchical system, branding the present set-up as *adharmik* (irreligious). So does 'Swami' Hirananda in his introduction to Muktananda's book. For, they believe that the kings upheld *dharma* as laid down inthe *Shastras* and as interpreted by Brahmin *Dharmacharyas*. It is not at all surprising, therefore, that Nepal, the only official Hindu state in the world, is not a democracy but a kingdom. The Nepalese King is considered to be the ideal Hindu ruler by many in the *Hindutva* camp. The RSS' Hindi organ, *Panchjanya* (December 6, 1992), describes him thus:

> Maharaja Birendra is said to be ruler of the hearts (*Hriday Samrat*) of all the Hindus of the world.

It would, therefore, not be at all unexpected if demands will soon be made to scrap democracy and revive monarchical rule in India. Erstwhile princes have flocked in droves to the *Hindutva* camp for its extremely reactionary social, economic, and political programme. Gwalior's Vijaye Raje Scindia is one of the leading lights of the VHP., and Bhagwat Singh, former ruler of Udaipur, also served as its President.

V.D. Savarkar, the earliest ideologue of *Hindutva*, even went to the extent of seeing the possibility and desirability of the Nepalese King taking over India. In his book, *Hindu Sangathan*, he included a piece entitled, "Academically—Who is likely to be Free Hindustan's Future Emperor?" He replied to his own question by declaring:

> Of all factors that count today, His Majesty the King of Nepal, the scion of the Shisodias, alone has the best chance of winning the Imperial Crown of India... Even Britain will feel it more graceful that the sceptre of the Indian Empire, if it ever slips out of her grip, should be handed over to an equal and independently of Britain like His Majesty the King of Nepal, than to one who is but a vassal and a vanquished potentate of Britain like the Nizam.[13]

Savarkar concludes by stating:

> But we also repeat that all this is academic... And yet, if but the Hindus realise... they will find that much that sounds academic today could be made actual...[14]

It is for us to see what the *Hindutva* brigade really stands for—primitive obscurantism and Manuite casteism. Much of that "might sound academic today" and is not "made actual". For that would spell the final, irredeemable doom of the people of this country. ■

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UNION BUDGET

Budget and Economic Reforms

N.K. SETH

The Finance Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, seems to have confounded everybody with his Budget. He has produced, as though by a miracle, a Budget which, as he claims, neither the Left nor the Right can seriously oppose. It is apparently a growth-oriented, export-oriented and foreign investment-friendly Budget. He has given away a revenue of Rs 5522 crores by slashing customs and excise duties on a wide range of goods, without proposing any new taxes. He has increased allocations for social sectors—education, health and rural development, etc. and the overall Plan expenditure has been increased by over 32 per cent. And yet the Budget deficit is only Rs 4314 crores as against Rs 7282 crores in 1992-93.

He has belied the expectations that the Budget would be a harsh one for the common man and the pace of reforms would be slowed down against the background of the post-Ayodhya political scenario. On the contrary, the Budget in itself is a soft one and the pace of the economic reforms has been significantly accelerated.

The rupee has been made fully convertible on trade account, import duties and excise duties have been substantially reduced and a beginning has been made to privatise the banking institutions by allowing them to go to the capital market to raise resources. Disinvestment of equity holding in public sector enterprises, which was unthinkable till the other day, is expected to yield an income of Rs 3500 crores. How did the Finance Minister perform this miracle of rushing through the reforms contrary to all expectations and what are the real implications of his proposals? Why has the the stock market suddenly crashed after the present Budget when it had climbed to dizzy heights after the last Budget? These are some of the questions which may have to be answered before any objective assessment of the Budget proposals can be attempted.

The facile explanation given about the crash of the stock market is that it is a reaction of disappointment at the failure to provide cuts in corporate taxes in the Budget as expected. This, however, appears to be too simplistic an explanation for the shocking nose-dive of the stock market. The more likely explanation could be the sudden loss of confidence among the investors about the future of the Indian industry when it is faced with competition with the multinationals in the near future. The hysterical boom in the stock market after the last Budget in contrast was obvioulsy manipulated or endorsed by the authorities to show to the world the dramatic results of the economic reforms initiated by the Finance Minister.

One of the most important implications of the Budget of Dr Manmohan Singh which should be obvious to anyone is that he has uppermost in his mind the interests of India's 150 million well-to-do citizens, and not those of the vast majority of the poor Indians. After all, the excise duty cuts, mostly on consumer durables like cars, TVs, ACs, fridges, etc. can benefit only those who can afford to buy them. They are beyond the reach of the vast majority of Indians for whom the Budget has no cheer. For them prices of commodities like sugar, wheat, rice, coal, railway freights and fares are of more immediate concern and they have all been increased even before the presentation of the Budget. One is now waiting in suspense about the likely increase in the prices of petrol and petroleum products which will further fuel inflation giving a lie to the government's claim that inflation is under control.

But by far the most significant proposal in the Budget is the steep cut in import duties. It is no secret that the Finance Minister had been under tremendous pressure to reduce India's exorbitant import tariffs as a step towards 'globalisation' of the economy and competition. How far and how soon liberalised imports will encourage the indigenous industry to become technologically and costwise internationally competitive is still a matter of conjecture. What, however, is almost certain is that a sharp cut in the import duties as proposed would encourage growth of imports and place an additional burden on the already critical foreign exchange position in India, at least for quite some time to come. As it is, there is a huge trade deficit of over $ 7 billion which is bound to increase once the crude oil prices shoot up as feared.

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WHAT is the Finance Minister's strategy to solve the critical balance of payments problem? He knows that the answer lies in achieving a quantum jump in exports and in attracting massive direct foreign investment. He has, therefore, proposed incentives for both. The full convertibility of the rupee or really of the dollar on trade account should encourage exports, as the exporters can now realise the full market value of the dollars earned through exports. But is that incentive enough? Unfortunately, one of the snags is that most of India's exports are import intensive and imports have become more expensive now.

Another snag is that there is a global recession at present and though outwardly the developed countries support 'globalisation' of trade in principle and ask the developing countries to bring down import tariffs they, on their part, are trying to follow increasingly protectionist policies. The interest they have, of late, been showing in the economies of developing countries, particularly of India, is not so much for exploring investment opportunities as for gaining access to their markets which have until now been out of their reach because of the high tariff barriers, especially in India.

It would, therefore, be highly unrealistic to expect a significant improvement in India's export performance in the near future especially having regard to past experience. Although the government's target for export growth was 16 per cent, from April to December 1992 it grew at a dismal rate of only 3.4 per cent over the comparable nine months of 1991. The Finance Minister is, therefore, simultaneously making efforts to attract massive direct foreign investment as China has done to solve the balance of payments problem. Unfortunately, India is at a great disadvantage vis-a-vis China for several reasons. For one, China began liberalising its economy as far back as 1979-80, whereas India initiated its liberalisation policies only in 1990. It is, therefore, natural that India should have to wait for a few more years to taste the fruits of the economic reforms.

Secondly, there is a persistent suspicion about India's commitment to the market economy. While Deng Xiaoping's unequivocal endorsement of the market economy, albeit socialist, and its incorporation in the Chinese Constitution have set at rest all doubts about China's new economic policies, Narasimha Rao's minority government's repeated assertions that the reforms are irreversible and the final goal is to usher in a free market economy, have not yet carried conviction with the international community. They feel that India is constitutionally still a socialist country and is unpredictable. The political situation in the country is explosive as proved by the recent communal riots followed by the bomb blasts in Bombay and Calcutta—both commercial nerve-centres of the country. The foreign investors would, therefore, prefer to 'wait and watch' before committing large investments in India.

The delay to invest on a massive scale is also because of several other reasons, though foreign businessmen are convinced that India offers a big potential for foreign investment with its huge market of over 15 million people who can afford to buy sophisticated goods. These are the poor infrastructural facilities like power, roads, telecommunications, etc.; the delay in finalisation of exit policy; and above all, the continuing reluctance of the bureaucracy to give up its powers of control and patronage. In China 80 per cent of the foreign investment is by overseas Chinese. India must, therefore, first convince the NRIs that it is good business to invest in India; the others will follow.

In any case, the uncertainties about increase in exports and foreign investment remain. In the meantime, the Finance Minister has to solve the problem of a trade deficit of over $ 7 billion. The forex reserves of more than $ 5 billion cannot be of help for long. He is, therefore, forced to woo the IMF desperately for an extraordinary loan of $ 7 billion. The IMF has agreed to come to his rescue but for a price. He has to abide by the conditionalities of the loan, the chief among them being that the pace of the reforms must be accelerated, irrespective of the consequences. This is precisely what the Finance Minister is doing without perhaps realising its full long-term implications.

Only time will tell if the eagerness of the Finance Minister to 'globalise' India's economy in a haste, presumably on IMF advice, was in the interest of the country. Unfortunately, the recipe of the IMF for an economic turnaround has not succeeded so far anywhere in the world, at any rate not before eight to 10 years. China followed its own strategy of development, as it did not have to depend for loans from the IMF/WB and it has astonished the world with a growth rate of 12 per cent.

In any case, it is doubtful if this was the right time to liberalise imports when India is facing a balance of trade crisis of a huge magnitude. Liberalisation of imports is bound to lead to a spurt in the volume of imports and the trade deficit could easily shoot up from the present $ 7 billion to $ 10 billion. The Finance Minister may cover the deficit this year by borrowing from the IMF and other multilateral agencies. What about next year, if the exports do not pick up enormously as desired? Who will give us the loans to tide over the next foreign exchange crisis?

By the end of March 1993 our foreign debt is estimated to be $ 86 billion. And more than half the annual export earnings in future will go merely in debt servicing which will not leave enough foreign exchange even for essential imports. Dr Manmohan Singh has presumably assumed that by next year extra export earnings and direct foreign investment will together cover the likely trade deficit. Let us hope he is right. If he is not, we are in for deep trouble. ■

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China's 'Theoretical Breakthrough'

BATUK VORA

Talks with some of the academicians and Communist Party leaders in China during my recent trip to Beijing convinced me that China no longer holds its vast public sector as sacrosanct. A theoretical breakthrough in the old Leftist armour has come about that changes the basic Marxist concept on the state-run means of production as understood by the Left throughout the world in the last few decades.

Continuous sliding down of the state-run units in the overall production could be observed without difficulty. The share of the state-run units in the industrial output value has come down from 75 per cent in 1980 to 54.6 per cent in 1992. It is further planned to bring it down to only 26 per cent by 1995. Price controls on most of the commodities and goods have been lifted and the market is regulating "a very large portion" of economic activities in the country. A red alert has been issued by the Chinese Communist leadership to all the 20 million members of the party to "guard against any lingering Left tendency to oppose market socialism".

According to a recent action plan, these enterprises are described as "socialist commodity production" centres which operate independently, assume sole responsibility for gains and losses and are owned by the people functioning under the principle of "separating ownership from management".

Modern capitalist corporations, even multinational corporations, have also separated ownership from control. Stockholders are effectively passive: their only real power is their ability to sell-off shares. But this may only constrain managers, not control them. Managers have substantial ability to feather their own nests. The Chinese managers are not yet free to that extent but there is a danger here. Markets are not self-regulating after all. How far the state would surrender its control and responsibility is a big question of debate within the Chinese Communist Party.

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THE right of self-management of the public sector units has been a sticky problem for the Chinese leadership during the last 14 years of economic reforms. At the end of 1991, one-third of these 11,000 large and medium units were in the red. New regulations have now paved the way for them to enter the market. These new regulations do not include privatisation. But allowing some of them to sell their stocks has opened new possibilities.

Zhou Zhenjua (of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences) a leading theoretician of the market socialism concept, said the Chinese economic reforms could not have gained such phenomenal growth without the material support from the public sector. But this support has almost thrown them into a deep ditch. This has led the Party to introduce basic rules to free the state-run units from the central ministerial clutches and "Leftist pitfalls".

Turmoil and stagnancy marked the Chinese economy from 1958 to 1978. These twenty years were "the period of Leftist mistakes". Mao Zedong's three year long "Great Leap Forward" threw the national economy into chaos, later forcing the Party to unanimously adopt economic readjustments. Mao admitted that he was ignorant about the economy. He seldom bothered about it after that crisis. But the thought that China could achieve "super-speed" in economic progress remained in the minds of some leaders.

The leadership now admits that some serious blunders were made during that period:

◆ The belief that economic construction cannot be separated from class struggle was the major mistake. "To put politics in command of the economy" in the twenty year period after 1958 was a big catastrophe. "Grasp revolution and promote production" was a running slogan. During the Great Leap movement the whole nation was fanatically communist. The utopian people's communes was regarded the best way of transition from socialism to communism. This remained the basic rural organisation until the 1980s. But this failed to help economic construction.

- The worsening international environment from 1950 to 1970 created an extremist reaction within China. The need for war readiness due to the confrontation with the US and the USSR was followed through by mass production of weapons. China tried to be the world's role model with Mao's red book moving all over the world. The only "benefit" Leftism brought to China in that period was the unprecedented endurance of suffering by the Chinese people.
- Backward culture and lack of democracy constituted yet another folly recognised by the present-day reformers. Poverty bred its own culture, making it more difficult to abolish poverty. A typical example was that "Poverty and Blankness" became a popular slogan.

All this has changed now. What is happening at present may take a swing to the other extreme, some China watchers fear. The "get rich" slogan in south China's economic zones, that is presented as model for the rest of the country, is giving a totally different picture of China to the outsiders. Greed, profiteering, racketeering, corruption together with the fastest economic development in the world are all running hand in hand.

Fourteen kinds of self-management power has been given to the public sector units. Chinese Premier Li Peng recently described it as a "theoretical breakthrough".

State designated foreign trade institutions are no more controlling the import-export trade of the state-run units. They have been given the power to make investments, determine the work force (this is vital in view of the large number of surplus workers in each unit) and decision-making powers to compete in the open market. For instance, according to the *China Daily* report, Dayan Mining Bureau in Shanxi province used to produce 900,000 tons of coal per year with a workforce of 5005. But now the number has been reduced to 1322 who produce 807,000 tons within five months!

One of the top leaders of the Guangdong province told this writer that:

> the recognition of market forces and the decision to carry forward market socialism is the result of emancipation of the mind and represents a giant leap in the Party's understanding of economic law.

The only doubt that strongly lingers in the minds of many within and outside China is the lack of any participatory democratic system. When asked about it he told that:

> Political reform in China is not to take the road of the kind of democratic politics in the Western countries. Its orientation is to build a kind of socialist democratic politics with Chinese characteristics.

What exactly does this mean and how far they would succeed in this is still a big question. ■

Caste, State and Modernisation

TUFAIL AHMAD

The modern centralised state with a bureaucratic net and a military compartment is a "relatively" heterogenic shift in India's system of governance. The Brahminical tradition erected Himalayan obstacles in the construction of a powerful centralised state through religious indoctrination towards the legitimation of authority in dominant castes. The ritual hierarchy coincided with the occupational hierarchy of wealth in order to provide legitimacy to the unequal social order. The *varna* structure offered the *raison d'etre* for maintenance of the system of stratification which, in the words of Thapar, "did not require the machinery of state". The king gathered legitimacy through alliances and gifts to local chieftains and redistributive endowments to temples and other centres of sacred attachment of the people. Sacral legitimation embedded authority in the king. Since this arrangement did not erase the primordial base of authority, the power remained constituted at local levels and power groupings continued to be based on kin, clan and caste.

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These primordial bases of authority remained intact till very late in the British era and they are still continuing. In our present democratic set-up, these primordial forces are emerging with much vigour. Effectiveness of the caste associations cannot be undervalued. Caste's lively role in the determination of the politico-economic power matrix is so well known that it hardly bears enumeration. However, as one walks from the Himalayan terrain down to Cape Comorin, the nature of caste's role in power determination keeps on changing.

Beyond the Aryan mainland, extensive migration and conquests produced ethnically and occupationally mixed populace who entered into constant competition for inclusion in the social hierarchy. In this region, a disjunction between the configuration of *jati* hierarchies and the abstract categories of the *varna* model is most visible. Unlike in the cow belt, the *varna* structure *per se* could not legitimise the secular stratification of wealth and power in South India. While remaining at the Everest of ritual hierarchy, Brahmins too sometimes controlled land. Besides being at the base of ritual hierarchy, lower orders sometimes acquired the nature of a dominant caste. South Indian temples acquired special meaning as a symbolic system involving exchange of material resources, and honours between locality chieftains, Brahmin sectarian leaders and temple deities. Such alliances withstood the winds of protest through times, at least until the British intrusion in India.

Sanskritisation as a process of orthogenetic change tended to fill up the gap between caste and status, as also between caste and politico-economic power. M.N. Srinivas cites castes which settled on marginal land in order to undergo Sanskritisation. Similarly, at times of fluidity in the power structure, some castes moved up the caste ladder. Though there have been orthogenetic changes in Indian society, they could not create an opposite base for the birth of a modern state. Under the prevailing primordial conditions, a centralised state could emerge only when such governmental institutions were established whose authoritative basis was normatively independent of Brahminical legitimation.

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THE links created between the colonial state and locally dominant groups had a seminal potential for prising apart relations between secular power and sacral legitimacy. According to F.F. Frankel, the fact that zamindars derived their dominance from legal rights conferred by the secular state; that they acquired prestige from such government honours as titles, as for example, Maharaja, Khan Bahadur, Rai Bahadur, etc., and appointments to local bodies as honorary magistrates and members of Municipal Committees and District Boards; that they resorted to British courts in evicting tenants for arrears of rents, and relied on the British armed force to put down rebellions, means that their secular power became visibly divorced from their ritual position. The English law transformed the ritual status into a political one and devalued the Brahminical function of legitimation. The kind of instruction required to enter the modern social and political elite became no longer the monopoly of the Brahminical tradition.

These were the symptoms of modernisation that produced a fertile soil for the birth of a centralised state. The modern state is the outcome of a long gradual process of heterogenic changes which have been happening on the lines of modernisation, secularisation, and English education. The state in India came as an agent of change. State-sponsored land reforms changed India's economic structure and diminished the dominance of the economically and politically dominant castes. The introduction of the democratic process through adult suffrage has created a sense of awareness among the backward caste groups, towards democratic rights. The realisation that a large chunk of the national cake is being eaten up by a few privileged groups has awakened the hitherto depressed classes. There are chances that only a Yadav will rule the State of Bihar tomorrow!

The traditional pattern of superordinate and subordinate relations in society underwent significant alterations in colonial India, a process which was accelerated after independence. Modernisation in the post-independence era is taking place, as A.R. Desai would argue, either on capitalist lines or non-capitalist lines, although he is more convinced of the former. Despite huge exports and massive economic development that India underwent in the sixties we witnessed the largest number of caste and communal riots on account of a disequilibrium in the politico-economic power matrix emanating, says Asghar Ali Engineer, from our unequal development on capitalist lines whereby some communities lagged behind in garnering the fruits of development.

Today, caste, modernisation and state are the major determinants of Indian's power matrix. In the backdrop of modern rationalism, caste in the form of Mandal Commission and state pose the agenda before each-other. Much remains to be seen about what happens in the days ahead. ■

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National Cultural Policy: A Critique

RAJEEV SAXENA

While criticising that there is a "lack of scientific cultural policy", the Lucknow declaration adopted at the fiftieth anniversary session of the National Federation of Progressive Writers (April 1986) stated:

> We forged a *macro-identity* in the fire of our national independence movement, but after independence, our ruling circles failed to satisfy the urge of *micro-identity* of different linguistic and ethnic units for lack of any scientific cultural policy, although its basis we had inherited clearly from our independence movement.

It further added:

> *Regional imbalances* in economic and social development, rising prices, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, lack of social amenities and certainties of life have sagged our humanist traditions as the ruling classes roll into the mud of corruption and draw the middle classes into the attractive net of affluence.

According to the above declaration, "the reactionary, communal and divisive forces and revivalist and fundamentalist ideologues took advantage of the popular discontent". We can realise today that without taking all these factors, one cannot frame any cultural policy. It is a most welcome development that under the Human Resource Development Minister, Arjun Singh, who has always shown awareness of the importance of the development of culture, the Centre has undertaken an exercise to formulate a National Cultural Policy (NCP).

The Nature

The draft, however, shows that the formulators have no proper understanding of the nature and importance of culture, nor have they any desire to engage in self-criticism and draw the proper conclusions. Though they begin their paper with a one-page quotation from the report of the UNESCO's Inter-Governmental Committee of the World Decade for Cultural Development (it seems that this report has been the main inspiration behind the idea of formulating a "National Cultural Policy" and not the present-day social disharmony and tragic situation), it is obvious that the quotation is an adornment and not a basis of understanding the importance of culture.

What the formulators understand by culture is best summed up in the last 1.9 paragraph of the first section of the document:

> Growth has frequently been conceived in quantitative terms, without taking into account its necessary qualitative dimension, namely the satisfaction of man's spiritual and cultural aspiration. Any cultural policy should restore to development its profound, human significance and should democratically provide for enjoying of artistic excellence by all communities.

The emphasis on "artistic excellence" leads to an elitist, non-functional cultural activity, which cannot serve a society that is passing through a crisis and social disharmony. This understanding of "development" would naturally lead to the necessity of training common men only in appreciation of the aesthetic value of art and literature.

Let us be clear that literature and art, song, drama, dance and painting, etc. are merely modes of expression of culture, but not culture itself. Culture is a way of life which is formed, moulded and developed through intercourse among human individuals through which a human being becomes a member of soceity in the course of his or her individual, biological development. The product of this intercourse could not be the final goal. The final goal for man is man himself, that is, how and with what values he emerges out of it. Whether he unites with the other man or he is repulsed by or he repulses the other. It is here that a state is asked to play a role in creating conditions that unite the society.

It will be good if we learn from the near past, that is, from the experience since independence. Prime Minister Nehru was himself a very cultured man and cared most for cultural values. He created three Akademies to nurture the great Indian culture (and the new NCP proposes to establish a fourth one under the name "Bharatiya Sanskriti Parishad"). But it helped not in the development of culture. One the other hand, we found that forces of disintegration grew in the course of our development. How did it happen? The above quoted excerpt from the Lucknow Declaration explains it.

Political Distortion

First, it must be noted that though Nehruji recognised unity in diversity being the chief characteristic of Indian society and culture, he

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was fearful in seeing the diversity and dealing with it in practice and conveniently forgot to implement the pledge of the freedom movement about reorganisation of States on linguistic basis. Consequently, every linguistic unit had to fight for its identity, strengthening in its wake regionalism and even giving birth to separatism. The Shiv Sena was born out of the womb of Samyukta Maharashtra Movement and Sants came to dominate the Akali Dal in Punjab. Indira Gandhi's tendency to centralise state power in Delhi further gave strength to the fissiparous tendencies. Use of communalism, casteism, money power and muscle power to run democracy and to manipulate and distort popular consciousness hit unity in diversity below the belt.

Where was secularism in the social policy of the country? After the partition, the Muslim League ceased to exist in India except in Kerala, about which Nehruji said: "The bear has left India, but kept its tail in Kerala." But later he and his successors embraced the same tail and the bear's other incarnations in the rest of the country for political gains. Similarly, the Hindu Mahasabha was castigated in speeches, but the tendency was to perform political actions, almost all inaugurations, with the Hindu rituals and Hindu Code Bill was enacted separately, making Hindus stand out of the social galaxy. Later, followers of other religions rushed to fight for their "identity". In the case of Shah Bano, the progressive Muslim public opinion was defeated in the face of attacks from religious bigotry that succeeded in manipulating the ruling Congress circles.

The Ayodhya dispute itself was born out of the Congress' bungling. If the government records are opened for study, it will be found that in order to defeat the then Socialist Party chief and one of our esteemed political leaders, Acharya Narendra Dev, the mischief of putting Ram Lalla idols inside the Masjid was surreptitiously conducted by the then District Magistrate (an RSS man) in order to ensure the victory of the Congress candidate Baba Raghav Das, at the instance of the then Chief Minister, Govind Ballabh Pant. Subsequently, no Chief Minister or Prime Minister showed any inclination and courage to solve the problem and allowed the situation progressively deteriorate by surrendering to Hindu communalists at every step right up to the December 6 crisis.

The Congress party which is now trying to anchor a new cultural policy must look into the past political and social policies minutely and find out the sources of its mistakes and correct them before embarking on the exercise.

But this is not all. It must redefine its value system and be determined to rebuild the Congress on its basis even if it loses political power. If the fascists come to power, they cannot hold on to it for long because their philosophy—or religion based on hatred—cannot hold this great country of ours as a national state in the modern world in which all states have become interdependent.

The Economic Factor

Besides, the economic policies have a major role in inculcating value-based culture. Here we refer to two points only.

First, if foreign capital finds free play in Indian economic life, foreign media with its soap opera culture and commercial paddings cannot remain behind. The entry of 'cable' TV programmes give us a glimpse of it when every minute you see a bed scene or a gunshot with glamour and face the imperialist interpretation of world events. Soon the world monopolies are going to publish their newspapers and magazines in India itself.

Secondly, in India itself the prices of newspapers and magazines and books have so much skyrocketted that they are becoming out of reach of even the middle classes; it is creating a serious cultural poverty at a time when the religion of hate and crooked falsehood is being spread by fanatics every moment. They have money enough to publish their propaganda material in large numbers without the press line.

Thirdly, with the prevailing values of profit and consumerism, the corrupt and self-centred inhuman practices are so much widespread and the common man swallows the sermons of illiterate, so-called saints that the vices are increasing because man has been increasingly becoming irreligious and agnostic. And it is not untrue that the Harshad Mehtas, Ramaswamys and Krishnaswamys are ardently religious people.

To sum up this analysis, we must realise that to outline the National Cultural Policy, we have to traverse in many directions. It cannot be the work of one Ministry because it is composed of many elements. The government as a whole has to undertake it in unison. The main task of our cultural policy must be to reintegrate the nation.

Let it be made clear once again that culture or cultural values are born when the people meet each other and try to work in cohesion. The freedom-loving nation of India, Hindustan or Bharat, began to take shape in the nineteenth century with the birth of the freedom movement in which enlightened people from all corners met and attempted to establish their common identity. Patriotic thinkers and philosophers like Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghose, Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and others contributed to the consolidation of Indian nationhood on the foundations of the diversities of cultural values that existed for centuries and yet had developed a common running thread.

Proper Education

The patriots who fought for freedom and nationhood are now gradually passing away and those who are living have tarnished their image for having held on to power for long with rising corruption and ill-deeds. An attempt is being made to replace them by those who served the British power apparatus, such as the S.C. Dixits, T.N. Chaturvedis, Ashok Singhals, etc. and a younger generation of politicians who were initially fed false premises about the political and social history of this country, especially about the so-called decline of Hinduism in this subcontinent.

The spread of education is another important basis for growth of culture. Unfortunately, it is one of the most neglected areas of our national development. Funds and facilities for this purpose are one of the lowest in the world.

Development and growth of libraries and reading rooms is another field of neglect. Even big towns have no proper libraries. The governmental subsidies for schools, colleges and their outfits have been reduced despite the NCP claims that "the country has reached a stage in its economic and technical development when the cultural dimension needs to be brought into sharper focus and strengthening". There is, however, no basis for going rapturous about this situation. Decline in grants in the face of rising prices is definitely a negative factor for the growth of instruments of culture. Even the existing Akademies, museums, art galleries, etc. are working with reduced financial allocations.

With all this past experience, a new NCP should be adopted to provide the guideline and principles of functioning of the whole government. The above criticism can very well show the path for the future. The first and foremost point to remember is that the New Cultural Policy has to be aimed at forging a social and cultural unity that would help in moulding a national state. This process began in the nineteenth century with a renaissance movement led by thinkers like Raja Rammohun Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghose, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Rabindranath Tagore down to Gandhiji and many men of letters who had importance in their regions. The latter should find place in the cultural activities of the respective regions or linguistic areas. Some of the ingredients of the NCP could be outlined as follows:

- Full respect for federalism and the cultural personality of all States should be assured in the light of the Sarkaria Report;
- Abolition of Schedule VIII in the Constitution and full freedom to the States to carry out their legislative and administrative work in the language of their State with the freedom to linguistic minorities to receive education in their language;
- Election laws be tightened so as to outlaw the use of religion and communal slogans in election campaigns;
- Social and personal laws should not be based community wise, but should be universal;
- Officers found favouring only a particular religious or caste group and who fail to preserve law and order should be duly punished;
- An effective campaign be launched to eradicte corrupt practices from all departments and Ministries;
- The position of all religious buildings should stand frozen by a legislation at their site on August 15, 1947 as per the law already enacted; and the law must be firmly implemented.
- The foreign information media monopolies should not be allowed to capture the Indian media or compete in the Indian market; the independence of the Indian media should be defended with all resources;
- Production of newsprint and printing paper must be boosted and made available cheap;
- A mass movement must be launched to increase the number of libraries and reading rooms and the state should increase grants and subsidies for this purpose;
- Primary education must become compulsory and the panchayat system should be made responsible for it as it is at present supposed to be in the hands of municipalities in the cities and towns;
- District and divisional administration should see that all important festivals such as Holi, Diwali, Christmas, Id, Milad-ul-Nabi, Tulsi Jayanti, Guruparv, Kabir Jayanti, Dayanand Bodh Divas, etc. are celebrated with the participation of citizens of all communities and religions, and the administration should have provisions to be able to inspire the organisers of such functions;
- Housing development authorities must build community centres with halls for staging dramas, film shows, exhibitions, seminars, etc.
- The three Akademies should undergo democratisation in view of the Haksar Committee Report.

Some of these ingredients may not appear to be connected with culture as such, but it is obvious that they are important from the angle of promoting cultural interaction and must become part of the national polity. We are creating very significant literature, drama, dance, music, paintings, but the tragedy is that they are beyond the reach of the common man. The government's cultural policy should be helpful in taking them to the mass of the people. The draft policy statement has to be revised and redrafted from this angle and should cover all the Ministries. ■

Globalisation of Mineral Resources and India

SANJAY CHANDRA

Globalisation is not internationalisation. The latter has an inbuilt respect for national sovereignty and scale hierarchies of regions and localities. The former is scale-free and denies the 'first charge' for benefit from mineral resources to the population around the mineral production unit. India insisted on this 'first charge' in her pre-independence Plan documents, but is now all set to 'globalise' her own mineral resources. The Soviet experience strongly underlines the disasters involved in such a course.

As late as 1990 it was noted[1] that China and India were 'sufficiently insulated' from global economic conditions in minerals. The USSR with its much flaunted mineral sufficiency was considered already 'globalised'. The global share of mineral output of the three upto 1980 has been highlighted by this author earlier.[2] Lovering's figures for 1943 and Pehrson's for 1962 quoted therein are supplemented by the 1991 Table (see following page) for tracing the destiny of resources that are always historical, cultural and transient. It has been argued elsewhere[3] that ignoring this transient historical facet of mineral resources in pursuit of globalisation in the last two decades has proved to be the undoing of the USSR. After all, no one now cares, for example, for the metal 'tin' as such, but only a set of properties of materials. We will recapitulate some of the other arguments later here.

The Table illustrates the spectacular growth of mineral production of China in iron, manganese, copper, lead, zinc, tungsten, antimony in the last decade, unmatched in earlier ones. This is more so, if we remember China has about three times the area of India, but the output ratios often exceed three. This is not so much differing from mineral endowments, as in the new resource frame north-east China and India are often considered as the poorest, but as a result of different expectations from the role of minerals in the economic activity.

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THE rightful place of minerals being primarily to improve the quality of life for all, as it was in the Leninist USSR, globalisation with its 'open' resource situation and 'incalculability of value flows' has to be shunned like plague. In fact, the halting international exchange of minerals sliding from its record high in 1980 and the diminishing value of energy trade illustrates the lesson against globalisation largely going home in most countries. But with us in India, having a totally different mineral trade basket than China today, the consumerism of the ruling elite in the decision-making process is overeager to court globalisation, stressing proven reserves on the shelf than area or population differentials of output. Indeed, as can be seen from the Table, China today is served per capita by minerals way better than us boasting emptily of scientific exploration efforts over a longer time interval.

The Table omits items as salt, as not much relative change in output is registered since 1980. It is still around 5 for India and 13 for China. But in the use there is a difference: in India two-thirds are consumed while globally only 19 per cent in food processing. The march of globalisation can also be traced in the drop of Canada's sulphur output from 27 to 12, following a trade dispute between India and Morocco in 1989 on phosphoric acid, in producing which sulphur is an important input. The transportable nature of minerals make them an easy prey to globalisation. But even in a high-bulk item as cement, today multinationals from the Pacific rim and Europe control more than 60 per cent of the US industry!

The *perestroika* men of the USSR sought[6] 'to stop excessive use of natural resources in production' 'by determining the quantity of raw materials it would be *expedient* to extract' rather than constantly trying to expand output. But they were also using the 'Japan' analogy under the spell of descaling inherent in globalisation. Shortage of investment capital and a technology gap already put an unwanted premium on the mineral endowment. The regional inequity is manifest in reports about the West Siberian oilfield producing 69 per cent of the country's oil containing some of the poorest people[7] among all of the former Republics or Armenia producing about 40 per cent of the Soviet molybdenum output in 1990. Uzbek gold, 25 per cent of the country's output since 1985, earned only 20 per cent of the value for the Republic, the rest having been impounded centrally. So when Yakutia plans to retain 60 per cent of the processed diamonds, the rumblings of ethnicity cannot be muffled any more. After all, resources are the resourcefulness of the people, the ability to turn environment into resource. It can be ignored in the name of globalisation only to invite a veritable chain of disaster.

It was in 1939 that Stalin set the task of 'overtaking American per capita production'. Technology and resources were perceived as frozen. This should have been publicly repudiated in the interest of socialism. The 'neo-Leninist phase' (1961-1975)[8] in the use of mineral resources saw to it that the Soviet economy grew more slowly, less wastefully and with proper environmental control. Even in 1960 upto 60 per cent of the turnover of primary production moved only tens of kilometres there, a far cry from the globalised eighties. But already after 1953 'spatially uniform development is given a go-by' and by 1983 the multilevel regional development 'appears to have been abandoned'. The energy resource feed to the West and pipelines saw to it that globalised Siberia produced 80 per cent of the country's hydrocarbons with Europe consuming more than 75 per cent of that.[9] The new feasible generating capacity in the European part of the Soviet Union was 'only nuclear'. Chernobyl closed this option in 1986. The globalisation virus of 'peaking' was detected first in iron around 1975, quickly followed by chromium in that very year, coal in 1978, oil shale in 1980, zinc in 1987 and oil in 1988. Fiftysix per cent of the hard currency earnings

MINERAL PRODUCTION (% WORLD), 1991[4]

(Figures within brackets are for 1980)

	India	China	Remarks
Population	827 m	1,122 m	
Coal	5 (3)	25 (16)	China overtook USSR in the last decade and has 76 per cent energy consumption from coal
Gas	0.6 (0.1)	0.6 (3)	USSR overtook USA
Cement	3 (2)	20 (10)	China overtook USSR
Phosphate	0.5	10 (4)	China overtook Canada
Talc	13 (5)	28 (6)	China overtook USSR
Fluorspar	0.4	20 (6)	" " "
Gypsum	2	8 (2)	" " "
Barite[5]	12 (6)	37 (5)	Reserve figure for China is 13
Steel	2 (1.4)	8 (4)	
Iron	6 (5)	18 (8)	China overtook Brazil, Australia
Manganese	6 (7)	7 (4)	Respective reserve figures are 2.1 and 1.6
Copper	0.5	6 (3)	
Lead	1	9 (4)	
Zinc	1	7 (2)	
Bauxite	3 (2)	3 (1)	
Aluminium	2.5 (1)	4.5 (2.5)	
Tin	-	17 (6)	Reserve figure for China is 20
Tungsten	0.4	80 (25)	
Antimony	0.3	56 (18)	
Gold	0.1 (0.2)	3 (4)	USA overtook USSR

from oil then turned the USSR into a one-crop economy. The crash can so hardly be averted, once 'equity considerations' about the direction, duration and scale of resource flows are ignored for so long.

Assimilation of 'new technology', stressed so much by Lenin, was neglected even in the 'neo-Leninist phase' of the USSR. This, plus the multilevel strategy for mineral sovereignty advocated by Tinbergen for the New International Economic Order, as opposed to current trends of globalisation, are to be pitted by us in India against the squanderings by the parasitic state apparatus. Foreign mineral export revenues are the *sine qua non* for development of countries like India. More intertwining of resources at local levels would involve the host communities with minerals. Otherwise, the intense despair of them feeling cheated by globalisation would inexorably fuel ethnic feuds. The answer lies in more internationalism and democracy so that the rational use of a country's own resources is made possible only through 'a genuine social revolution'[10] within each as an antidote to globalisation.

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Dr Farooq Ashai: Another Martyr

INDER MOHAN

The brutal point-blank assassination of Dr Farooq Ashai on February 19, 1993 cannot possibly be condemned in words. More so because of the totally distorted version reported by the media, obviously at the behest of the State Establishment, to the effect that Dr Ashai had got involved in a cross-firing between the terrorists and security forces. Actually, Dr Ashai was going by his car alongwith his wife who is also a doctor, and their daughter. His car was stopped by the security forces at Natipora in Srinagar. At gun-point he was told that his car had to be searched. Dr Ashai who was the topmost orthopaedic surgeon serving as Professor and Head of the Government Hospital for Bone and Joint Surgery in Srinagar (Kashmir), protested: "What for?" He mentioned to them his official designation. Before he could have his say, three shots were pumped into his body and he was no more.

Dr (Mrs) Ashai who is an eyewitness to this ghastly criminal tragedy maintains that there was no cross-firing with any terrorist group whatsoever.

The late Dr Ashai was popular among the people not only as a doctor but also as a human being. For the last few years, he alongwith his other officially appointed doctor-colleagues, had to perform the painful task of examining and treating scores of patients who were victims of savage, inhuman atrocities inflicted by the state. Some of the victims were subjected to such extreme torture that they could not have been saved even if the medicines, which were always scarce, could somehow have been made available in time. The mutilated bodies of several young men who were killed while under illegal police

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custody without trial were quite often found floating in river Jhelum. Dr Ashai and his colleagues prepared authentic medical reports in this connection, much to the discomfiture of the Establishment. These reports revealed hair-raising facts and details of actual torture which were quoted by the human rights organisations within the country and abroad.

A fearless person like Dr Ashai, though he never dabbled in politics, was definitely committed to human rights. This aspect was more than enough to make him a thorn in the flesh of those who run the Establishment.

In addition to the cold-blooded murders of hundreds of youths in Jammu and Kashmir State, Dr Ashai's officially-sponsored assassination is identical to that of H.N. Wanchoo's recent dastardly stage-managed killing on December 5, 1992.

One feels convinced that the pleas of cross-firing in the case of Dr Ashai and of an 'unknown assailant' having shot at Wanchoo are merely meant to whitewash the Establishment's crimes against humanity. The people in the J&K State know the grim realities and they can neither be misled nor taken for granted. In fact, such cowardly misdeeds of the Establishment make the people even more valiantly determined to fight for their basic rights, including their regional rights.

The recent mass-killings, rapes and arsons and lootings in Shopian and Sopore add to the already long list of such gruesome happenings. Is there any wonder then if the Establishment as a whole, both in the State and at the Centre, are completely alienated from the people? Instead of realising this hard reality, both the Establishments at the Centre and the State have continued their tiresome talk of initiating the so-called political process in the J & K State. This 'political process' is nothing but the imposition of a government of the Centre's stooges in the State. Through such a puppet government, the Centre aims at killing two birds with one stone. First, it seeks to maintain its highly centralised control over the State; and secondly, to deny the people their basic right of regional freedom.

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THE only feasible and lasting solution to the deliberately created 'Kashmir problem' has been provided by the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). The JKLF has the people's support. It has throughout maintained that the Central Establishments of India and Pakistan are only interested in occupying the territory of Kashmir and are least concerned with the ever-growing sufferings of the people. The JKLF has further maintained that the people of India and Pakistan are fighting for their regional and other basic rights, boldly defying all the terror let loose by their respective Establishments. The JKLF is further convinced that the Kashmiris, both in India and Pakistan, can be a bridge of permanent peace in the subcontinent with the support of all those people who are deeply involved in their struggles for their fundamental human rights, with regional rights being their top priority. The JKLF also stands for complete regional rights for the people of Jammu and Ladakh regions and is totally opposed to the dismemberment of the J & K State as preached by certain known communal parties. Last, but not the least, the JKLF has been consistently appealing to the Kashmiri pandits who have for the time being opted to stay out of the State to return to Kashmir particularly when a sizeable number of Kashmiri pandits have continued to stay in the Valley. It has appealed to the Kashmiri pandits not to fall prey to the deliberate communalisation of the J & K politics by the State Establishment. The JKLF has been fervently appealing to the pandits to maintain the secular and peaceful traditions of the Kashmiri people as a whole.

In the end I would personally like to state emphatically that I stand for the JKLF. Had I not been confined to bed due to a paralytic stroke I would have been in Kashmir fighting shoulder to shoulder with the people under the secular and democratic guidance of the JKLF. All of us who stand for regional and other human rights are neither secessionists nor terrorists. It is the Establishments of India and Pakistan which have been consistently distorting and confusing the rightful demand of regionalism with secessionism, and militancy with violence and terrorism. Militant programmes are neither based on violence nor on terrorism. Can anyone dare call Mahatma Gandhi a terrorist who gave the most militant slogan of 'Quit India' in 1942? All people's movements start on a peaceful note. It is the Establishment which, while stubbornly denying their just demands, always resorts to violence and terrorism. Again, personally during the last fifty years of my public activities and active participation in struggles for human rights I have always been a militant without ever believing in violence or terrorism. That is why I would prefer to die as a militant alongside the peace-loving people of Kashmir. ■

Chris Hani

HARI SHARAN CHHABRA

By eliminating Chris Hani, General Secretary of the Communist Party of South Africa, former Chief of Staff of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (military wing of the ANC) and a Member of the ANC's National Executive, the perpetrators of the crime have done damage of unimaginable proportions to the South African society that has already been fractured and brutalised by years of apartheid rule. One only hopes that this tragic development will not bring about a setback to the negotiations process that is underway to build a new, non-racial and democratic South Africa for which Hani and his colleagues worked tirelessly.

The South African police has confirmed that a White man of Polish origin has been held for shooting Hani four times at point-blank range. Obviously, the handiwork of neo-Nazi conservative Whites, who want South Africa to remain under the White minority forever, this lunatic fringe is digging its own grave.

Thousands of South Africans, including many political leaders, have been killed in the unremitting violence, but 50-year old Chris Hani was the seniormost Black leader to be assassinated in decades. Even as Nelson Mandela has appealed to his mourning countrymen to remain calm, Hani's cold-blooded murder is bound to increase tension in the country.

Hani was an extremely popular leader among the ANC supporters and therefore a political force to be reckoned with. His involvement in the ANC's armed struggle and commitment to the Communist Party made him one of the top heroes of South Africa's militant youth. A forceful speaker, the political rallies addressed by him always drew thousands of cheering supporters.

I had the honour and pleasure of meeting him only once in 1990. A charming and handsome personality, he spoke firmly but softly. With a boyish face, he looked much younger than his years. Anyone would have been impressed at the way he articulately analysed the problems created by socio-economic imbalances in the country. I could feel how his heart bled for the exploited and persecuted have-nots in his beloved country. Meeting him was love at first sight, at least from my side. It is sad to think that I shall never see his smiling face again. But his memory will remain ingrained in me.

Chris Hani was a great admirer of India's contribution to the struggle against apartheid. A fact very little known is that he paid a visit to India in 1991. He was not on any secret assignment, but since there was always a threat to his life, his visit was not publicised. He wanted the *Umkhonto* soldiers and officers to be trained in India so that they could easily merge into the new South African defence forces when the need arose. He told the Indian defence officers that he wanted a professional army, not a political army.

Hani was certainly a hardliner, but it would be ridiculous to suggest that he had fallen out with Mandela on political and economic issues confronting South Africa. Both he and Mandela valued democratic discussion in the ANC. Late in 1990, when the present illegal White minority regime was not willing to grant Hani general amnesty and detained him as he entered Johannesburg from the pro-ANC safe haven in Transkei Homeland, Mandela had to tell President F.W. de Klerk curtly that the ANC-South African Government talks would come to a halt unless the government allowed Hani freedom of political activity. It was no surprise that the de Klerk Government had to yield!

It is often said that Chris Hani would have worn Mandela's mantle. If there was voting in the National Executive of the ANC, youthful Hani would have scored over the ANC Secretary-General, Cyril Ramphosa, and the International Affairs Secretary, Thabo Mbeki, the two most powerful young leaders, for the top position in the movement.

In paying a personal tribute to Hani, I would say that he was the person most feared by the present regime, but never was there a man, other than Mandela, of course, so much loved by the workers of the township and the poor peasants of the countryside. His assassination has left a void in South Africa that would be difficult to fill. Hani will always be remembered with love and affection in the post-apartheid era and will find a prominent position in South African history.

Way back in June 1964, at the Rivonia Trial, Mandela explained why South African politicians accepted Communists as their friends. He said:

> For many decades, Communists were the only political group in South Aftrica, who were prepared to treat Africans as human beings and their equals, who were prepared to eat with us, talk with us, live with us and work with us... Because of this, there are many Africans, who, today, tend to equate freedom with communism.

I venture to quote Mandela's words uttered nearly three decades ago, as though he was paying a tribute to his departed colleague today. May his soul rest in peace! Sleep well, my friend! ■

Two Men with One Mission

A.K. KIDWAI, ABDUL SATTAR and CH. KUSHAL PAL

It all began in the wake of December 6, 1992 and the ensuing riots. Residents of thirteen colonies around Okhla and adjoining areas (Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs) worked together to ensure that the communal virus does not invade the peaceful atmosphere of their area.

Jamia had always remained a haven of peace. Even during 1947, when Dr Zakir Husain and his small train of dedicated teachers with support from the local villagers, staked their lives to ensure that in matters of communal harmony and peaceful co-existence, Jamia and its environs became a model for the rest of the country. Following the demoliton of the Babri Masjid and the ensuing riots, some residents of South Delhi colonies decided to offer a united front to all the communal issues that kept cropping up. Behind this community effort, Captain Anand was a moving spirit. Born in Lala Musa, District Gujarat in 1931, Satyapal Anand spent his life in the Indian Merchant Navy. He retired from service and built himself a small house where he lived with his wife and two children; a perfect little family of four. But the events following December 6 did not allow conscientious citizens to sit in the quiet comfort of their homes. Captain Anand jumped into the fray.

For the last one year, during his walks in Ashoka Park, he had been running into an elderly gentleman of striking appearance. He turned out to be none other than Ghulam Rabbani Taban, the doyen of Urdu poetry and a lifelong crusader against communalism. Taban and Anand became walking companions. Taban told Anand: "Captain what a shame! We met when life had all but ebbed away. There is so little time left."

◆

ANAND and Taban lived in New Friends Colony and Zakir Nagar respectively—Hindu and Muslim majority areas that bordered each other. Anand's was a well-to-do locality with all the civic amenities. Taban's was a densely populated area, minus most comforts. Whenever there was a communal build up, the two juxtaposed areas became the hotbed of rumours, fears, mischiefs, causing great anguish to the residents. Anand's house became a centre for dispelling false rumours, disseminating information, and liaising with the Muslim localities. Taban became his mentor. Too ill for personal participation, he worked through Anand.

During the recent crises (Bangladeshi "infiltrators"—January 21, Chetna Rally—February 25) some residents ran open houses. Three people from both communities kept a 24 hours vigil, allaying fears, squashing rumours, and keeping up a steady inflow and outflow of information. Captain Anand's was one such house at the time of the February 25 crisis. The pot kept boiling in the Anands' kitchen to warm up the visitors, who kept coming into their house all throughout those nights.

A few days later, tension gripped the area when news spread of demolition of unauthorised constructions by the DDA in a primarily Muslim area. The month of Ramzan exacerbated the issue. Police vans lined the streets, people stood in small groups and sounds of firing were heard from the enclosure where the demolitions were taking place. Where was Captain Anand? For two hours this *mard-e-momin* (man of God) stayed inside the unauthorised enclosure reassuring the jittery public, talking to elders, sending the angry youngmen inside. No man realised that this robust man with a booming voice was being closely stalked by death which was to strike within two weeks.

◆

ON February 7, Taban died, having left his torch in the capable hands of Anand. Exactly forty days later Anand joined his friend and fellow rambler of the Ashoka Park days. A poet and a soldier, a Muslim and a Hindu, a *guru* and a *chela*—two men with one mission.

That morning when we were taking Captain Anand to the *Shamshaan Bhumi,* someone remarked, "It was too early for our movement to have suffered such a major setback." True. But now more than ever we can't stop. Even though one Captain has gone, his spirit will steer our vessel safely through turbulence. To quote two lines from Taban:

Justju ho to safar khatam
kahan hota hai
Yun to har mor pe manzil ka
guman hota hai.
(When you are in search, the
journey never ends,
although every turn may appear
to be the destination.)

His *uthala* meeting was held in a temple in New Friends Colony. It was attended by Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians from Okhla and adjoining South Delhi colonies. Touching tributes were paid to Captain Anand by Muslims at the meeting held in a Hindu temple in New Friends Colony. This was followed by an extempore recitation of *shlokas* in chaste Sanskrit by an uncle of Captain Anand.

There was a feeling among all present that the moment reflected India's true culture much more than any contemporary movement speaking in the name of culture or religion has, or could have, done. ■

(Courtesy: *The Hindustan Times)*

Statement on Sardar Sarovar Project

The recent decision of the Government of India to forego the remaining part of the World Bank loan for the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) throws serious doubts on the ability of the project authorities to meet even minimum rehabilitation and environmental conditions which have been laid down and accepted by the government itself. Even after being several years into the project, this inability is a clear indication of the unviability of the project, which people in the affected areas have been pointing out for a long time.

Moreover, the financial viability of the project, which was in any case questionable, has been put into further doubt by the recent decision. The remaining cost of several thousands of severe financial crunch, is going to hang like a Damocles' sword on the economy of Gujarat and India.

In view of the above, it has become imperative that the government announce a complete stoppage of work and a comprehensive review of the SSP, with full participation of representatives of affected and concerned people. Any attempt to push through the project at this stage will be completely undemocratic and unacceptable.

People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL),
People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR),
Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI),
World Wide Fund for Nature—India (WWF—I),
Ankur,
Lokayan,
Kalpavriksh,
Delhi Forum,
Kindness to Animals and Respect for the Environment (KARE),
Alternative Communications (ALCOM),
Network to Oust Nuclear Energy (NONE),
Indian National Trust for Arts and Cultural Heritage (INTACH),
Public Interest Research Group (PIRG),
The Other Media,
Bharat Jan Andolan (BJA),
Jan Vikas Andolan (JVA),
National Campaign for Housing Rights (NCHR),
Forum for Women and Politics,
JNU Students' Union,
Multiple Action Research Group (MARG),
Development Alternatives (DA),
Gandhi Peace Foundation (GPF),
Energy and Environment Group (EEG),
Jagori,
Saheli,
Shakti Shalini,
Sabla Sangh,
Kali for Women,
All India Students' Association, JNU Unit,
Action India,
JNU Narmada Support Group,
Progressive Students' Union,
IIT Nature Club,
Sampradayikta Virodhi Andolan,
National Fisherworkers' Forum (NFF).

April 8, 1993

One Two, Buckle My Shoe

'Iraq Buckles Under' said a headline in one of our newspapers the day after George Bush's farewell show of strength against President Saddam.

In reporting A.B. Vajpayee's very brief 'indefinite fast' earlier, another newspaper said: 'Chavan buckles under, concedes demands'.

One normally comes across 'knuckles under' and 'buckles up', but 'buckles under'! Well, these are days when freedom of speech means licence with the language. So who will care for an old ghost even if he growls?

Adverbial prepositions are one of the more slippery problems of this eely language called English. Frederick T. Wood, author of the book, *English Prepositional Idioms*, begins his preface with the statement: 'One of the most difficult aspects of the English language to master is the idiomatic use of prepositions.'

But in the case of 'knuckle' and 'buckle', there is little ground for ambiguity. *Concise Oxford* tells us that 'kunckle down' or 'knuckle under' means 'give in', 'submit' and 'buckle up' is 'give way', 'crumple up'. It does not list the usage 'buckle under' at all.

A film writer in the week-end supplement to a daily newspaper introduces Dharmendra, the actor, in the following words: 'He came at a time when people like Dilip Kumar, Raj Kapoor and Rajendra Kumar ruled the roast in Bollywood.' Each film journalist makes his own rules of style, but this one must have remembered some old grammar dominie who had dinned it into his head that the correct form was 'rule the roast' and not 'rule the roost'.

So it had been thought for years. But no longer. *Concise Oxford* provides no help, and leaves us to choose either form. But Ernest Gowers, revising Fowler, told us as far back as 1965: "Most people say 'roost' and not 'roast'; they... think that the reference is to a cock keeping his hens in order." Against this tempting piece of popular etymology the *OED* offers us nothing more succulent than "None of the early examples throw any light on the precise origin of the expression."... "Rule the roost" is so much commoner and to most of us seems so much more intelligible that the day may come when we shall not be able to write "roast" without being suspected of didacticism!

The day came long ago.

H.Y.S.

NIKHIL: Signs of Change and Hope

(Continued from page 4)

emerged victorious while Mulayam Singh's Samajwadi Party and Kanshi Ram's Bahujan Samaj Party supporters bagged the other two. In the space of about a 100-days from December 6 this shift in the campus temper has come about. Baffling indeed for the pundits of establishment politics.

Inevitably, our media, long accustomed to equating public affairs with the activities of political parties, has as yet been unable to detect the significance of these new emerging elements in our national life. This inadequacy of the media born out of its obsessive preoccupation with the political parties and their leaders, could be seen in its conspicuous neglect in covering the enormous movement of various activist groups all over the country—the quantum of whose activities, really multi-dimensional, far outstrip that of our conventional political parties which is largely confined to election campaigns at different levels from the panchayat to the Parliament.

This failure of the media in covering these new, unorthodox forms of public activity, has a deleterious effect on the national consciousness. And this depression in morale, particularly in the educated section of the public, is directly related to the degeneration in the working of conventional politics dominated by political parties.

It is in this dismal background that one has to evaluate the new and unorthodox forms of initiative and intervention in public life. Such changes can hardly be expected to be smooth as the old, even when decomposed, fights back to block the new. All the more reason we have to keep our ears to the ground to detect the footsteps of a new order. ■

(Courtesy: *The Hindustan Times*)

Ayodhya 1992 — India 1947

MILOON KOTHARI

The Secularists: A fear

Through the minds of many passed
a listless fear
that hope had been abandoned
in a masjid square
that echoed your voice before
you spoke
that christened your coming before
you were conceived
and was waiting for your footsteps before
you wandered aimlessly towards it.

The Separatists: The message

Their silence (till December 6th) was representative
of an urge suppressed
as if they were being held captive
by
their futile existence
in the face of
their altruistic reminders
of
their conciliatory gestures
towards a God
that did not exist
but was created to
summon incessantly
illusions of
a Hindu rashtra
(and the God was created)
by voices that spoke in unison of
forgotten memories
irrepressible fears
and
surreptitious hopes
that hid
a callous forbearing
a societal indifference
with
characteristic aloofness
whose pious exterior tries to conceal
hearts and minds
ull of
lonely misdemeanors
resolute ill-affection
blind adversity
and
myopic visions.

The Secularists: The defiance

In the courage of your non-violence you offered
no compromise
no surrender
and as you watched the masjid turn to rubble
tore
delicate fabric of secularism
disgorged
depth of tradition evolved over centuries
disfigured
face of Indian identity
you raised a searching flag
resistance
perched on a pedestal
soul's neccessity
poured out acts in
rhymed spontaneity
that required
no second guessing
no caustic commentary
no polemical dialogue
no rhetorical assurances
and
no partial prophesies
only to rekindle and reknot
a historical continuity
and through your actions you spoke of
a society yet to come
a collective will no longer dispersed
and through your hope-filled despair you were able to summon
courage from solidarity
you were able to count
the relevance of the moment
and you called out
an echo
inaudible to those that dare oppress
freedom
as if to at once repair the damage inflicted
within your arterial passages
as if to remove all doubts of
a second coming of swaraj.

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It is on the Kashmir soil, that Islam and Hinduism are being weighed now. If both pull their weight correctly and in the same direction, the chief actors will cover themselves with glory and nothing can move them from their joint credit. My sole hope and prayer is that Kashmir should become a beacon light to this benighted subcontinent.

MKGandhi

(December 29, 1947)

M/s Safi Corporation

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EDITORIAL

Another Coup d'etat

Ghulam Ishaq Khan's action of dismissing Nawaz Sharif and his government in Pakistan by invoking the controversial Eighth Amendment of the Constitution (that empowers the head of state to dissolve the National Assembly and the four provincial legislatures as well as appoint the Chief of Army Staff) is much more than an autocratic move to settle scores with the Prime Minister who had threatened to divest the President of his special powers: it is an unambiguous ouslaught on the system of parliamentary democracy chosen by the people of Pakistan after stoically suffering the oppressive Martial Law for long years.

What are the charges framed against Nawaz Sharif and his government (constituting the so-called "alibi" for the drastic step)? Ghulam Ishaq Khan cited the Prime Minister's defiant address to the nation on April 17 accusing the Presidential palace of intriguing against him as amounting to a call for subversion. Thereafter he said:

> The serious allegations made by Begum Nuzhat Nawaz as to the high-handed treatment meted out to her husband, the late Chief of Army Staff (General Asif Nawaz Janjua), and the further allegations as to the circumstances culminating in his death indicate that the *highest functionaries of the federal government have been subverting the authority of the armed forces* and the machinery of the Government and the Constituton itself. (emphasis added)

Is any further proof necessary of the pre-eminence the armed forces continue to enjoy in present-day Pakistan?

What are the other accusations?

> The functionaries, authorities and agencies of the government under the direction, control, collaboration and patronage of the Prime Minister and Ministers have unleashed a reign of terror against the opponents of the government, including political and personal rivals.

Inherent in this observation is the blatant partisanship of the President who has thus literally devalued the august office he occupies (in order to satisfy his Pathan ego bruised by the offensives against him on the part of the Punjabi businessman who held the office of the country's Prime Minister for the last 30 months). Blinded by hatred Ghulam Ishaq has not been able to comprehend the fact that his words signified a virtual declaration of war by the President against the Pakistan Government headed by the Prime Minister of the day. That is an unseemly spectacle eroding the honour and prestige of Pakistan itself.

Eventually, the *fatwa* issued by Ghulam Ishaq Khan amounts to the hijacking of the democratic process.

> The government...is not in a position to meet properly and positively the threat to the security and integrity of Pakistan and the grave economic situation confronting the country necessitates the requirements of a fresh mandate from the people of Pakistan.

The President decides in his wisdom that the government must go. He manipulates a split in the ruling coalition and the ruling party to turn it into a minority but has no patience to wait for the National Assembly session to see if the government has really lost its majority. (The Assembly, incidentally, was to meet only on April 19 less than 24 hours after he dissolved it, dismissed the Nawaz Sharif administration and installed the caretaker "government of national consensus" headed by the Punjabi politician and

Muslim League backbencher, Balkh Sher Mazari.) Having himself decided that the Nawaz Sharif Government must quit he carries out that decision in the same cold-blooded manner in which he sacked the government of Benazir Bhutto 32 months ago.

Commenting on that development the present writer had noted in these very columns on August 9, 1990:

> The Pakistan President's high handed and arbitrary action does not call for elucidation. This is palpable to anyone who glances at the Presidential proclamation. It refers to "internal dissensions and frictions, persistent and scandalous 'horse-trading' for political gains and furtherance of personal interests, corrupt practices and inducement, in contravention of the Constitution and the law and by failure to discharge substantive legislative functions other than the adoption of the Finance Bill"-- none of which is serious enough to warrant the dismissal of a duly elected government and dissolution of a National Assembly elected by the people. So at the end of the list of charges comes the bland announcement bearing the stamp of an autocrat: "The National Assembly has lost the confidence of the people." By what yardstick has this been measured? Especially when the Benazir Government was to face, on August 8 itself, a non-confidence motion tabled by the Combined Opposition Parties (headed by the Islamic Jamhoori Ittehad, the IJI, the party in office in the Pakistani province of Punjab). Anyone with the slightest respect for democratic norms cannot but interpret it as a dictatorial fiat inflicting a body blow to Pakistani democracy..

Precisely those very words are applicable in the current setting while analysing Ghulam Ishaq Khan's dismissal of the Nawaz Sharif Government.

◆

TENSIONS between Ghulam Ishaq and Nawaz Sharif were on the rise on account of the President's repeated interference in the governance of the country. In fact the first signs of conflict between the two were visible on the question of appointing the Director General of the Inter-Services Intelligence. Eventually Nawaz Sharif had his way and the person selected to succeed Major General Asad Durrani in that post was a Sharif protege, Lt. General Javed Nasir. (No wonder the axe has now fallen on him as well as the Director General of the Intelligence Bureau, Brigadier Imtiaz Ali.) But Nawaz Sharif was not prepared to give Ghulam Ishaq a second term without repealing the controversial Eighth Amendment which could have been possible if Benazir Bhutto, herself a victim of that constitutional provision, had joined hands with Nawaz Sharif. However, that was not to be and finally Ghulam Ishaq succeeded in overcoming all obstacles. Before that Nawaz Sharif also tried but failed to prevent the President from handpicking the Chief of Army Staff, General Abdul Waheed Kakar, who was ultimately installed by superseding several others. Ghulam Ishaq made full use of the Eighth Amendment much to Nawaz Sharif's discomfiture. Now General Abdul Waheed has proved his loyalty to Ghulam Ishaq.

None is seeking to defend Nawaz Sharif's scandalous activities. The charges of corruption against him are mind-boggling and definitely unique in our part of the world by any standards. Yet those could not justify Ghulam Ishaq's arbitrary and authoritarian step armed as he was with the Eighth Amendment enacted by Zia-ul Haq in 1985. This precisely is the crux of the matter. And in this context what is particularly reprehensible is Benazir's opportunistic collaboration with Ghulam Ishaq because it is a glaring instance of forgetting the past and helping the process of strangulation of democracy in Pakistan (on the lines of Nawaz Sharif in 1988 when he defended the Eighth Amendment as it aided him in his struggle for power against Benazir—obviously now the roles have been reversed!) instead of assisting the Pakistani polity's transition to full democracy.

But, unlike Benazir, Nawaz Sharif is still popular in Punjab, the province he has nursed well as both the Chief Minister of Punjab and the Prime Minister. Hence Ghulam Ishaq is left with no alternative but to ensure his removal from the scene. That is why every attempt is being made to "prove" his involvement in the charge of "poisoning" the late Army Chief, General Asif Nawaz Janjua. This is reminiscent of Ghulam Ishaq's frantic efforts in the initial stages to debar Benazir from contesting the poll scheduled for October-end 1988 (those efforts were abandoned once it became more than clear that Benazir could not hope to return to power in those elections). However, analysts are still not very sure if the forthcoming elections to the National Assembly—slated for July 14 this year—would take place on time. For, the general view is that Ghulam Ishaq needs a pliable Prime Minister who would not even remotely attempt to revoke the Eighth Amendment at any point of time. As a result neither Benazir nor Nawaz Sharif, the two main contenders for the office of the Prime Minister, would be acceptable to the President.

Much has been written about the prospects of a further worsening of Indo-Pak relations now that Ghulam Ishaq is in full command in Islamabad. That is very likely to happen. But all that is secondary. The basic question is the fate of the Pakistani people (who alone hold the key to improving Indo-Pak ties in case they are able to assert themselves in the wake of the flagrant assault on democratic values and norms in our neighbouring state). In this forbidding scenario we wish to repeat what I.K. Gujral, the Minister for External Affairs in the National Front Government headed by V.P. Singh, had stated in the Lok Sabha after Benazir's dismissal in August 1990:

> We sincerely hope that there will be no discontinuity or setback to the democratic process in Pakistan and that the people's will would prevail.

That indeed is the earnest feeling today of all secular Indians whose hearts cannot but bleed for their Pakistani brethren bracing up to face new trials following the third "constitutional" coup d'etat in five years.

April 21 S.C.

Aping the Adversary

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

It is surprising how intelligent people in politics sometimes take up positions which should logically belong to their adversaries.

The Muslim League in 1940 picked up the so-called 'two-nation theory' which a bunch of extremist intellectuals had first coined to back up their demand for Pakistan. Other parties in India rejected it. The Congress made it clear that it did not accept the theory itself though it agreed to the partitioning of the country on the basis of the very same two-nation theory. By implication, Pakistan is supposed to belong to the Muslim nation, and therefore there could possibly be no equality between the master community, the Mussalman, and the subject community, the Hindu, in Pakistan. Hence, the rulers of Pakistan were party to the forcible exit of millions of Hindus from Pakistan, the larger number from the west than in the east—despite Jinnah's inaugural address to the Pakistan Parliament on the very morrow of the partition in which he had said that in the new state of Pakistan, all citizens would be equal irrespective of community, race or creed—a speech which was quietly given a rather indecent burial by those who ruled Pakistan.

This idea of dividing the people according to their community identity, is now taken up, of all the people, by the BJP, which claims to be an implacable adversary of Pakistan. In its stand on the large body of people crossing into India from Bangladesh in recent months, the BJP has no objection whatsoever to the Hindu migrants, but wants the Muslim migrants to be thrown back into Bangladesh. The leaders of the BJP are intelligent people, at least most of them. They know perfectly well that this continuous exodus of Bangladeshis into India is due to the fact that their country is one of the worst poverty-stricken countries in the world. In fact, Bangladesh is included in the UN categorisation, in the LDCs—the Least Developed Countries which is entitled to special care. The BJP leaders know all this. They could have raised the question of Bangladeshi exodus as a regional and international phenomenon—an excellent issue for the SAARC to take up. Instead, they have made it an exclusively communal issue, to damn the Muslim community.

And justifying this clamour to force the Muslim migrants back into Bangladesh, they have raised a hair-raising theory, namely, that these Muslim migrants from Bangladesh settling down in the border districts contiguous to Bangladesh, are changing the demographic pattern of these districts, and in another ten years, these would thus be Muslim-majority districts of India, which the Bangladeshis would demand as part of their country on the strength of the two-nation theory and so we would be forced into another partition of this country. The plain and simple fact is that a Muslim must not be treated with trust under the BJP lexicon, and so has to be thrown out of the country.

Incidentally, the *Akhand Hindustan* slogan which the BJP's political ancestor, the Jana Sangh, had raised is now quietly given up. It may be due to a realistic understanding that an entire state can hardly be expected to be liquidated at the call of the BJP; but this abandoning of the slogan to undo the partition of 1947 might be due to the realisation that in an *Akhand Hindustan*, there would be many more Muslims to be tackled than in the partitioned India. For, *Akhand Hindustan* would mean not only the liquidation of Pakistan but Bangladesh as well—which, if realised, would mean an enormous increase in the number of Muslims to live with. Obviously, the party which is getting het up at the exodus of several lakh Muslims from Bangladesh, would be aghast at the arrival of several crores, posing a threat to the ideal of *Hindutva*.

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IF we look carefully, the swift demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6—which the BJP has, for all practical purposes, welcomed, as nobody among its leaders barring Atal Behari Vajpayee has expressed even a word of regret at this violation of the pledged word by the party's Ministry in UP—is in keeping with the style of violent bigotry which they ascribe to Emperor Babur's lieutenant Mir Baqi. By the official BJP stand, Mir Baqi had committed a sacrilege by destroying a place of worship of the Hindus and built another structure at that very spot, meant for the worship of Muslims, namely, the Babri Masjid. This was supposed to have taken place five hundred years ago. Now in the year 1992, the *kar sevaks* at the call of the BJP, arrived at Ayodhya and swiftly followed the very same procedure of Mir Baqi which the BJP leaders have always condemned, namely replacing by violence the place of worship of one community by another place of worship of another community. What Mir Baqi did five hundred years ago has been faithfully followed now by the *kar sevaks* following the BJP call—this, like Mir Baqi destroyed a place of worship to build another belonging to a different community. Mir Baqi would have understood the glory of Sadhvi Rithambara's ecstasy in the afternoon of December 6, 1992.

Another anomaly in the BJP propaganda—which must be awkward for the leaders of the party with a modern outlook—is the campaign that the Muslim community is furiously increasing its number because it permits a man to marry and keep as many as four wives at a time. By this device, the BJP leaders in their propaganda say, the Muslim community's demographic position will soon change and thereby presumably India, or a good part of it, will form into a Muslim-majority region—that is, ripe for another Pakistan. I can understand a Christian leader working up such a spectre, but coming from devout Hindu leaders for whom every word in the scriptures and epics is sacred, it is odd to hear about the danger of polygamy. Because, most of the Hindu gods and kings had more than one wife. In fact, they had many more than four—quite often scores. Lord Ram's revered father, King Dasarath, had as many as four wives, and it was because of his promise to one of the four, that he had to banish, Ram, and died heart-broken. It is worth noting that the ancestors of the BJP leaders in Parliament, those who were like-minded, opposed the Hindu marriage legislation in the fifties. For the BJP leaders, polygamy should not be a taboo to be run down. So, why pick on the Muslims for their religion permitting four wives at a time?

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The BJP leaders strive to assure the Muslim community that under their dispensation, the minority community would be looked after and not persecuted. They even claim that the Muslim community on its own would respond to such assurances from the BJP, but it is the Congress and the so-called pseudo-secularists who have been spreading poison to vitiate and mislead the Muslims to look upon the BJP as their enemy. In proof of their claim, the BJP leaders often publicise the point that wherever a State has come under BJP rule, the incidence of communal rioting has spectacularly gone down. At the same time, not a single BJP leader has even mildly criticised the Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray's vitriolic call for pogrom against the Muslim community. Rather, when asked, the BJP leaders claim that the alliance of the BJP with the Shiv Sena persists and would remain. BJP leader Advani visited Bombay after the Shiv Sena's pogrom campaign in January which ended up in a horrendous outburst of mob violence along communal lines.

Lal Krishna Advani, Atal Behari Vajpayee, Murli Manohar Joshi, Govindacharya and many others in the BJP leadership are mature politicians. Do they seriously believe that the Muslims would feel safe under their dispensation after having seen the BJP sticking on to its alliance with the Shiv Sena, the designer and executor of the first genuine pogrom of an entire community in this country?

Grant for a change, Joshiji, that the Muslim has at least a morsel of common sense. After finding you in the Shiv Sena's company, would any Muslim in his senses feel comfortable under your care? ■

Article 356 and Centre-State Relations

S.K. JAIN

Article 356 of the Constitution, which provides for the imposition of President's Rule when there is a failure of constitutional machinery in any State, has become most controversial and generated enough heat in the post-Ayodhya developments. The ambiguity of the expression—"if a situation has arisen in which the government of the States cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution"—has led to the Article's persistent misuse by all governments at the Centre. This is evident from the fact that President's Rule has so far been imposed more than 96 times during the four decades of the working of the Constitution.

This particular Article 356 of the Constitution of India provides that "it is a duty of the Union to ensure that the government of every State is carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution". So the President is empowered to make a proclamation when he is satisfied that the government of a State cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, either on the report of the Governor of the State or otherwise. By such a proclamation, the President may:

(a) assume to himself all or any of the functions of the State or of any other authority except the High Court;
(b) declare that the powers of the legislature of the State shall be exercisable by or under the authority of Parliament.

In short, by such a proclamation the Union would assume control over all functions in the State administration except judicial.

The duration of such a proclamation shall ordinarily be for two months. If, however, the proclamation is issued when the House of the People is dissolved or dissolution takes place during the period of two months, the proclamation would cease to operate on the expiry of 30 days from the date on which the House of the People first met, unless the proclamation is approved by Parliament. The two-month proclamation can be extended by a resolution passed by both Houses of Parliament for a period of six months at a time, subject to a maximum declaration of three years [Article 356(3)-(4)].

By the 42nd Amendment, 1976, the President's satisfaction for the making of a proclamation under Article 356 had been made immune from judicial review. But the 44th Amendment of 1978 has removed that fetter, and so the courts can now intervene if the proclamation is malafide or the reasons disclosed for making the proclamation have no reasonable nexus with the "satisfaction of the President".

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IT is clear that the power to declare, through a proclamation, the failure of the constitutional machinery is an extraordinary power of the Union to meet a political breakdown in any of the units of the federation [or the failure by such units to comply with the federal directives (Article 356) which might affect the national strength]. It is one of the coercive powers in the hands of the Union to maintain the democratic form of government, and to prevent factional strifes from paralysing the governmental machinery in the State.

Nevertheless, the experience with the working of Article 356 since independence suggests that during the days of one-party (Congress) dominance, President's Rule was used as a device to manage the transitional problems and a short spell of this was usually effective in restoring stability in the States. The situation has changed radically after 1967. The figure of the application of the Article for imposing of President's Rule reveals a sharp rise (11 times before 1967 and more than 80 times thereafter) in the post-1967 Indian politics. The fourth general elections brought a major change in the political map of India by throwing off the monopolistic control of twenty years of uninterrupted Congress rule in India. The 1967 general elections marked the beginning of the transformation of the Indian political system from a one-party dominated system to a multi-party system. The Congress majority in the Lok Sabha was greatly reduced and in eight out of the 16 States which went to polls the Congress failed to secure aboslute

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majority. Coalition Ministeries were formed in a number of States for the first time. Many of them were unstable being coalitions based on convenience rather than principle. But due to defection and counter-defection, Ministries came and went in less than two years in many States. President's Rule (Article 356) in the 1967-72 period was imposed in as many as 18 instances by the Union Government. During this period itself the Opposition parties started expressing dissatisfaction over the emerging state of Centre-State relations and demanded a change in the existing framework.

However, between 1972 and the historic internal Emergency of June 1975, which transformed the entire political scene in India and took the country to a totally different phase, President's Rule (under Article 356) was imposed five times by the Union Government: During the Emergency the entire gamut of Centre-State relations was far removed from normalcy. The Janata Party, for the first time since independence, came to power at the Centre by defeating the Congress party in 1977. But the Janata Government in 1977 set an unwholesome precedent by imposing President's Rule in nine States under Article 356. This was gross misuse of Article 356 by the Centre for political reasons, and this the Congress party in 1980 was quick to imitate with an air of legitimacy when it dissolved the non-Congress Governments in the States after coming to power at the Centre.

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SINCE the eighties there have been instances of misuse of Article 356 by all the political parties ruling at the Centre for political expediency and in the interest of the respective parties concerned. Repeated onslaughts on the federal fabric of our Constitution by the misuse of Article 356 has devalued the concept of federalism before us. The recent dismissal of the three BJP Governments of MP, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh by using Article 356 has further undermined the federal constitutional structure of India. By doing so the Union Government has also denigrated one of the basic structures (federalism) of our Constitution.

However, misuse of Article 356 brings the simple truth that our parties and leaders are thinking of themselves and not of the nation and the people. They have probably forgotton what transpired during the debate in the Constitutent Assembly on the use of Article 356. Dr B.R. Ambedkar defended the retention of Article 356 on the plea that the use of this drastic power would be a matter of last resort. In his words:

> ... The proper thing we ought to expect is that such Articles will never be called into operation and that they would remain a dead-letter. If at all they are brought into operation, I hope the President, who is endowed with this power, will take proper precaution before actually suspending the administration of the province.

Besides this observation, the recommendations of various commissions, the ARC, the Rajamannar Committee and recently the Sarkaria Commission could not change the attitude of the ruling parties at the Centre for misusing Article 356.

The Sarkaria Commission Report on Centre-State Relations, despite the bitter historical experience and complaints of some political parties and State Governments, has not recommended the deletion of Article 356. Its main recommendations are:

1. Article 356 should be used very sparingly, in extreme cases, as a measure of last resort, when all available alternatives fail to prevent or rectify the break-down of the constitutional machinery. All attempts should be made to resolve the crisis at the State level before taking recourse to the provisions of Article 356. The availability and choice of these alternatives will depend on the nature of the constitutional crisis, its causes and exigencies of the situation. (Part-II, p. 178)
2. A warning should be issued to the errant State, in specific terms, that it is not carrying on the government of the State in accordance with the Constitution. Before taking action under Article 356, any explanation received from the State should be taken into account. However, this may not be possible in a situation when not taking immediate action should lead to disastrous consequences. (Part-II, p. 178)

However, these recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission would have little meaning without change in the attitude of the political parties and the leaders of our federal polity. Due to the gross misuse of Article 356 in recent times, Centre-State relations have been considerably strained in the present political turmoil of the country. But those who see this problem in the light of the constitutional provisions are perhaps missing the vital point that the genesis of the problem lies not in the letter but the implementation in the proper spirit of the Constitution. Article 356 should be used alongwith enforcement of the Sarkaria Commission's suggestions. Moreover, in the light of the Sarkaria Commission Report there is also the need for a more comprehensive discussion on the entire gamut of Centre-State relations. This is essential for the smooth functioning of our democratic federal polity. ■

Bangladeshi Issue in Perspective

B.K. ROY BURMAN

As far as the Bangladeshi issue is concerned, we must, at the outset, understand what is meant by a 'Bangladeshi'. Thereafter we need to study the estimates about their number.

Concept of Bangladeshi

The BJP and many others differentiate the post-independence migrants from Bangladesh into two categories—*refugees*: Hindus migrating from Bangladesh, on the assumption of their being victims of political discrimination in that country; and *infiltrators*: Muslim migrants, on the assumption of their turning into political hazards of India in the long run.

Until recently in Assam the difference was not so sharply perceived. While it was apprehended that both Hindu and Muslim Bengali migrants are political and cultural loads on the indigenous social milieu of Assam, Hindu Bengali migrants were more negatively evaluated as they were competitors for jobs, educational facilities and political positions. In many areas the productive role of the Muslim migrants from Bangladesh was appreciated.

In Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya and among the tribals of Tripura too both Hindu and Muslim migrants are looked upon as Bangladeshis and Muslims are less negatively valued because of their subsidiary productive role.

The Buddhist Chakmas, who have migrated or are still migrating, pose a problem of a different order. There are a good number of Chakmas living in Tripura and Mizoram for generations. After independence several thousand Chakmas who were ousted because of the Karnaphuli project took shelter with their kith and kin in Tripura and Mizoram. They were not much welcomed in Tripura and there was positive hostility against them in Mizoram. The bulk of them were removed to Arunachal and settled there in the sixties. Still they do not have citizenship rights.

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At the time of the liberation struggle in Bangladesh a section of the Chakmas sided with Pakistan, perhaps because of bitterness at being evicted from their homes because of the Karnaphuli project; but this has became a political load which they carry to a certain extent in Bangladesh.

In the post-liberation period there has certainly been political victimisation of the Chakmas and many have taken shelter in Tripura. While negotiations take place off and on between India and Bangladesh some sections of the tribals of Tripura feel that treating the Bengali Hindu migrants and the Buddhist Chakma migrants differently by India is a discriminatory approach against the tribals.

Estimates about migrants from Bangladesh during the last one decade

On March 24, 1993 *The Statesman* reported that according to a respectable source, the population of Bangladesh registered a shortfall of 7.3 to 9.3 million from the earlier projections and much of this shortfall is due to the outmigration of millions to India. *The Statesman* also reported that according to the Union Home Ministry, 14 million Bangladeshis "sneaked into India" through West Bengal over the last ten years.

It is to be noted that the projections are based on a number of assumptions and the projections and actuals rarely tally. In the 1981 Census India's actual population was less than the projected figure.

Some relevant figures as provided by the ESCAP may be considered to get an idea of the overall situation in India and Bangladesh in perspective.

Country	*Mid-1992 population*	*Annual growth*	*Crude birth rate*	*Crude death rate*	*Density of persons per 2 km*
Bangladesh	111,701	2.44	38.2	13.8	776
India	879,548	1.91	29.3	10.2	168
S.E. Asia	1,234,731	2.15	32.0	10.6	182

Country	*% of Urban population*	*GNP per capita (US $)*	*Contraceptive practices (%)*
Bangladesh	17.7	210	31
India	25.7	350	45
S.E. Asia	26.9	444	—

The foregoing figures show that the annual growth rate is much higher in Bangladesh than in India. These also show that the adoption of population control measures is not insignificant in Bangladesh.

An indication of the impact of migration from Bangladesh to the regions of India where heavy migrations are alleged will be available from the growth rate of the population in those regions.

State	*Decadal variation in population*		*Annual Experiment growth*	
	1971-81	*1981-91*	*1971-81*	*1981-91*
India	24.66	23.50	2.22	2.11
Arunachal Pradesh	35.15	35.86	3.04	3.06
Assam*	23.36	23.58	2.12	2.12
Manipur	32.46	28.56	2.83	2.51
Meghalaya	32.04	31.80	2.80	2.36
Mizoram	48.35	38.98	3.99	2.29
Nagaland	50.05	56.86	4.09	4.50
Tripura	31.92	23.69	2.29	2.24
W. Bengal	23.17	24.55	2.10	2.20

* Projected figures as no census took place in Assam in 1981.

The table shows that in India as a whole the population growth rate was lower than that in the previous decade. In Assam the growth rate in the last decade was marginally higher than the national average; in West Bengal also it was not unusually high. The growth rate was unusually high in the smaller States of Arunachal, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. Certainly in Tripura the growth rate has been affected by in-migration from Bangladesh. But in the other States of the region intra-country migration, migration from Bangladesh and migration from the neighbouring countries of Nepal, Bhutan, China (Tibet) and Burma have contributed to the population upsurge in varying degrees. The total in absolute number is not, however, significant for a big country like India. At the same time at the regional and local levels these are significant demographic facts and will have to be carefully analysed after the relevant census data are available. In the meantime the decadal growth data for the districts skirting Bangladesh will be examined.

Decadal growth rates in the districts skirting Bangladesh

As no census took place in Assam in 1981 due to the disturbed conditions, the decadal growth rates for 1971-91 would be furnished. But for considering these rates in perspective, the 1971-91 cumulative growth rates for India as a whole, for Assam and for the adjoining States skirting Bangladesh are being provided.

It is to be noted that here the district level growth rate figures are based on the provisional figures published by the Census Commissioner in Paper I of 1991 and processed and reproduced by Ashish Bose in *Demographic Diversity of India 1991 Census.* (State and District level data-reference book)

Districts	*Population Growth during 1971-91*	*Districts*	*Population Growth during 1971-91*
Dhubri	+ 55.77	Cachar	+ 47.65
Kokrajhar	+ 75.94	Marigaon	+ 51.07
Bongaigaon	+ 64.43	Naogaon	+ 51.17
Barpeta	+ 42.71	Golaghat	+ 53.09
Nalbari	+ 48.72	Jorhat	+ 32.68
Kamrup	+ 64.69	Sibsagar	+ 36.80
Darrang	+ 54.17	Dibrugarh	+ 37.20
Sonitpur	+ 56.49	Tinsukia	+ 47.16
Lakhimpur	+ 55.91	Karbi Anglang	+ 72.79
Dhemaji	+ 104.48	Hailakandi	+ 47.76

In this table what is most interesting is that the population growth rate in the districts in the immediate vicinity of Bangladesh are in general lower than other districts with exceptions like Jorhat and Sibsagar; on the other hand, the growth rate tends to be high in the districts of high tribal concentration like Kokrajhar, Dhemaji, Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills.

Until the relevant census tables are available it will be hazardous to come to any definite conclusion based on these data. But one has to keep these in the back of one's mind for formulating the lines of further enquiry.

As noted earlier for comparison, all-India and State level data on population growth during 1971-91 will be furnished. Unlike the district level data, the all-India and State level data are based on final population of all the censuses including the 1991 census.

States	*Population Growth during 1971-91*	*States*	*Population Growth during 1971-91*
India	54.45	Mizoram	107.51
Arunachal	84.93	Nagaland	134.20
Assam	53.26	Tripura	77.16
Bihar	53.27	W. Bengal	53.63
Manipur	71.26	Meghalaya	75.43

Compared to the all-India population growth rate, at the State level the population growth rate has been lower in Assam and West-Bengal—the two States alongwith Tripura supposed to have been the most affected by migration from Bangladesh. Bihar, which is separated from Bangladesh by a narrow strip in West Bengal, has also a growth rate more or less at par with Assam and West Bengal, but lower than that of the country as a whole. It is only in the States in the region with a small population that the growth rate of population is very high; but it is well known that apart from migration from Bangladesh there are other factors which have played some role in this matter.

For the districts outside Assam both the 1971-81 and 1981-91 census data have been processed and published by Ashish Bose. The same will be presented here. The data in respect of the districts in Bihar close to Bangladesh but not having common border with Bangladesh are also included as in the controversy relating to the Bangladeshis they are frequently referred to.

West Bengal

Districts	*Population Growth Rate* 1971-81	1981-91	*Districts*	*Population Growth Rate* 1971-81	1981-91
Cooch Behar	+25.28	+21.82	Nadia	+33.29	+29.82
Jalpaiguri	+26.55	+25.96	N. 24 Parganas	+31.42	+31.66
West Dinajpur	+29.31	+30.25	S.24 Parganas	+19.42	+30.08
Maldah	+26.00	+29.63	Murshidabad	+25.49	+28.04

Except Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri in all the districts in West Bengal having common border with Bangladesh the population growth rate is considerably higher than the national average. If the growth rate of the districts away from the Bangladesh border is considered, the demographic pattern adjoining the border comes to sharper focus. The data are furnished here.

Districts	*Population Growth Rate* 1971-81	1981-91
Howrah	+22.74	+25.35
Hooghly	+23.86	+22.36
Medinipur	+22.39	+23.83
Bankura	+16.93	+17.88
Purulia	+15.65	+19.61
Bardhaman	+23.47	+21.96

Comparison of the two sets of data, however, brings out an interesting fact. Neither in the districts adjoining the border nor in the ones away from the border a consistent pattern of the increase or decrease of the growth rate of population is perceptible. In Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri and Nadia adjoining the border there has been a decline in the population growth rate. In West Dinajpur and North 24 Parganas there has been nominal increase. But there has been substantial rise in the growth rate in Maldah, Murshidabad and South 24 Parganas. In contrast among the districts away from the border only Hooghly has shown a nominal decline in the growth rate; all others have shown a rise in the growth rate.

Meghalaya

Districts	*Population Growth Rate* 1971-81	1981-91
Jaintia Hills	+37.72	+40.14
East Khasi Hills	+34.35	+28.50
West Khasi Hills	+45.73	+34.59
East Garo Hills	+32.96	+38.44
West Garo Hills	+21.70	+29.17

In all the districts of Meghalaya, the population growth rate has been much higher than the national average during the last decade. But except for some parts of Jaintia Hills and the West Garo Hills it is difficult to say, based on the existing data, to what extent migration from Bangladesh is responsible for such growth.

Mizoram

Districts	*Population Growth Rate* 1971-81	1981-91
Aizwal	+48.76	+39.47
Lunglei	+39.23	+28.55
Chhimtuipui	+61.44	+50.03

Except for Lunglei both in Aizwal and Chhimtuipui the growth rate is high. But in the Chhimtuipui district there is considerable migration of Chakmas from Bangladesh; migration of Mizos from Burma and Bangladesh and the adjoining areas of India is not inconsiderable in the State.

Nagaland and Manipur

Nagaland and Manipur have no common borders with Bangladesh but have with Burma; and there are some Nāga and Kuki tribes in Burma. There has always been cross-border movement in this area. But a good number of Bangladeshi Hindus and Muslims are reported to have settled down in Nagaland and Manipur. It is only after the migration tables of the 1991

Census are available can one make an estimate of the migrants from Bangladesh.

Arunachal Pradesh

Arunachal has no common border with Bangladesh but has common borders with Burma, China (Tibet) and Bhutan. There are always trans-border movements in this region. A good number of Nepalese and persons originating from Bangladesh have also come over to Arunachal.

Tripura

Districts	*Population Growth Rate* 1971-81	1981-91
West Tripura	30.59	30.04
North Tripura	32.31	29.51
South Tripura	53.98	40.76

All the districts of Tripura have common borders with Bangladesh and in all of them the population growth rate is much higher than the national average. Migrants from Bangladesh are not only Bengali Hindus and Muslims but also Buddhist and other tribals.

Bihar

Purnea and Kishanganj districts are reported to have received a good number of migrants from Bangladesh during the last decade. Their population growth rates are as follows:

Districts	*Population Growth Rate* 1971-81	1981-91
Purnea	+27.42	+23.58
Kishanganj	+30.15	+22.52

It is interesting to note that in both the districts the population growth rates were much higher during 1971-81 than during the next decade. In fact during 1981-91 the growth rate in Purnea was almost at par with the national average and was lower than the national average in Kishanganj. This rapid appraisal shows that there is no evidence of a large influx of migrants from Bangladesh except in some pockets. It also suggests that in some parts of North-East India migration from the adjoining countries has also taken place on a significant scale. ■

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The Apartheid Bomb

NINAN KOSHY

The disclosure by President F.W. de Klerk that South Africa 'had' nuclear bombs did not come as a surprise to the country's friends or critics. It has, however, caused considerable embarrassment to a number of Western countries. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) finds itself in an uncomfortable position. While the announcement by the President responded to some concerns in the international community, it has raised several questions.

De Klerk announced on March 24 that South Africa had built six nuclear bombs in 1989 and that they were all dismantled in 1991. South Africa's hands were now clean. It was with a tinge of pride that he claimed that the nuclear weapons programme had been carried out without foreign assistance and that the decision to dismantle the weapons was voluntary and unprecedented. He explained that South Africa built the weapons because of "Cold War tensions that embroiled South Africa in war" and specially mentioned the Soviet and Cuban threats.

For more than two decades a number of Western countries had collaborated with South Africa in its nuclear programme claiming that the programme was entirely for peaceful purposes. Even when substatntial evidence (showing that South Africa was pursuing a nuclear weapons programme) was given by several organisations, the Western nations took pains to mislead the international community, defended South Africa's programme and their collaboration with it. They gave the cover under which South Africa carried out its clandestine programme. In September 1975, in a statement on "The Nuclear Conspiracy", the African National Congress, on the basis of substantial documentation (including photostats of secret documents), said that by 1968 the regime (South African Government) was itself proclaiming the intention to have nuclear weapons.

> Since then, the determination to construct a uranium enrichment plant, the agreement for its construction recently concluded in the Federal Republic of Germany, and the advanced stage of the development of the project finally establish the nuclear capacity beyond doubt, for the regime has now acquired access to and control of both the scientific expertise required and the material resources.

The author, a former Secretary of the World Council of Churches, was a Visiting Fellow of the Harvard Law School (1991-92).

The statement added:

> South Africa is now being established as a convenient loophole in any international agreement to limit conventional or nuclear weapons; for, by licensing, technical and financial arrangements and collaboration with the imperialist powers that which is attempted to control among the major powers is being carried out indirectly in South Africa.

The publication of the secret documents which came into the possession of the African National Congress in 1975 caused the resignation of Bonn's representative on the NATO's military committee, Lieutenant General Gunther Rall, who travelled incognito as Mr Ball to South Africa in August 1974. There was enough evidence about official West German participation in the development of South Africa's nuclear programme.

South Africa is one of the largest producers of uranium in the world. It has been known that South African and Namibian uranium was sold to the USA, the UK, Germany, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Switzerland and Japan. After World War II the USA and the UK provided substantial financial and technical support for the development of the South African uranium mining and extraction industry and training for South African scientists. Training was provided in several other countries too, notably West Germany and France. Foreign experts were recruited for the South African nuclear programme. It was this pool of expertise which also enhanced South Africa's nuclear weapons capability.

International concern about the nuclear weapons programme of South Africa intensified when the news broke out that South Africa had been planning to detonate a nuclear device in the Kalahari in July 1977. The facts about this remained unclear mainly because the Western countries were keen to continue their nuclear collaboration with South Africa which they insisted was purely commercial.

Information about the Kalahari desert test site and increased repression in South Africa led to the convening of the UN Security Council in October 1977. A draft resolution prepared by the African group called on all states to "refrain from any cooperation with the South African regime in nuclear development" but this was vetoed by the three Western permanent members of the Security Council. Instead a more limited resolution was tabled by the Western members imposing an arms embargo against South Africa under Chapter VII of the UN Charter which stated that "all States refrain from any co-operation with South Africa in the manufacture and development of nuclear weapons".

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IN September 1979 the US VELA satellite detected evidence that a low-yield nuclear explosion had taken place in the region around South Africa. This was kept secret by the US Administration until a private US television network disclosed that information a month later. Western governments refused to act on the basis of this evidence and instead gave several explanations which allowed South Africa to pursue its clandestine activity. In 1986 Mordechai Vanunu, an Israeli scientist who had worked at the Dimona nuclear research centre, confirmed that the Israelis had helped South Africa detonate a nuclear device in September 1979 in the southern end of the Indian Ocean over the uninhabited islands of Prince Edward and Marian. For this and other revelations about Israeli nuclear programmes Vanunu is undergoing a jail sentence in Israel.

There is no doubt that it was because of the external nuclear collaboration that South Africa acquired nuclear weapons capability. The USA, France and the Federal Republic of Germany were involved. They always claimed that their collaboration was exclusively of a peaceful nature knowing fully well South Africa's intentions and actions.

The claim by de Klerk that the nuclear weapons programme was entirely home-grown is untenable as it is beyond doubt that external assistance was crucial for the development of the programme. As Abdul Minty, head of the World Campaign against Military Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa, said, de Klerk denied foreign assistance because he did not want to embarrass the Western nations that not only helped South Africa build the Bomb but kept secret their knowledge of the programme.

De Klerk announced that the bombs were built in 1989 when his predecessor was in power. If the bombs were meant to counter the Soviet or Cuban threat and because of Cold War tensions, as claimed, by 1989 the Cold War tensions had eased and almost ceased and there was little Soviet or Cuban threat in the region. On December 22, 1988, Angola, Cuba and South Africa signed a formal treaty—negotiated with the mediation of the USA and the Soviet Union—on the process leading to Namibian independence as well as a treaty requiring all 50,000 Cuban troops to be withdrawn from Angola. In early 1989 de Klerk became the leader of the ruling party and in August, the Acting President. It is most likely that the bombs were built before 1989.

It is not clear how South Africa destroyed the bombs. The USA and the former Soviet republics like Russia are having problems in destroying the surplus bombs under treaty obligations. The USA has offered both technical and financial assistance to Russia for the demolition of the bombs.

This also raises the question whether the International Atomic Energy Agency has been able to find the weapons grade uranium from the dismantled bombs in its estimate of enriched uranium in South Africa's possession. The destruction of the weapons has come as news to the Agency also. After the South African Government's announcement, the Agency said it would be conducting a special inspection to verify that the country no longer has any atomic weapons. The Agency's discomfiture is understandable as it has already conducted 115 inspections of South Africa's nuclear sites since 1991 and has been reluctant to initiate steps against South Africa when evidence was available. It is not known whether South Africa destroyed all its atomic weapons and whether they were destroyed before or after it signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Already by 1989, in some Western capitals concern was being raised about the possibility of the 'apartheid bomb' becoming the 'Black bomb'. The USA will be particularly relieved that the bombs have been destroyed. The USA has been worried whether an African National Congress-led government possessing nuclear weapons would use them for bargaining for financial assistance or for pressure on the nuclear club. It will still have to worry that a government which can produce and destroy nuclear weapons can again produce them, if it wants.

The zeal with which Western nations like the USA pursue the nuclear programmes of countries like North Korea and Iraq and impose sanctions on them is in sharp contrast to their policy which has enabled Israel and South Africa to acquire nuclear weapons capability. ■

The Internal Enemy

RIAZ AHMAD

The demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992 and the subsequent defence of this act of vandalism, open or veiled, by the rabid Hindu communalists have sent shock-waves throughout the country. The demolition and its defence were expressions of communalism and symbolic of physical and verbal vandalism in public life, gaining increasing currency due to certain conditions generated by India's lopsided and insufficient socio-economic development as well as political opportunism displayed by most of our political parties.

The grossly repulsive act of demolishing the mosque, engineered by the *Sangh Parivar*, and then its shameless defence by the same forces and others representing a similar mentality[1] are a glaring example of concerted efforts aimed at demolishing India's constitutional structure and cutting at the roots of the country's centuries-old traditions, and can be described as anti-national. Hence, to look at these developments just as an evidence of an anti-Muslim posture on the part of rabid Hindu communalists and to interpret them only as a warning served to Muslims that their survival or honourable existence is in danger, will mean taking a partial view of the reality and magnifying one dimension out of all proportions. The purpose here is not to rule out any possible threat to the Muslims' honourable existence. The threat, though not immediate, is imminent in the event of the forward march of Hindu communalism. The intention here is to suggest that the growth of Hindu communalism would go beyond threatening the honourable survival of Muslims in India; it will lead to a catastrophe.

As mentioned earlier, the survival of the constitutional structure which stands on the foundations of the principles of rule of law, liberty and equality, and which provides for a democratic system and accords due respect to the judiciary is at risk alongwith the survival of the Indian traditions of pluralism, secularism and tolerance. Strangely enough, even Hinduism's survival appears to be in danger due to the words and deeds of the present-day self-styled votaries of Hinduism.

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THE unfortunate events of Ayodhya, which have brought into sharp focus the possible dangers looming large on this country and its people, were the fall-out of a careful manipulation of communal feelings over time. A glance at the relevant developments over the years will show how communal frenzy and mass hysteria were built up creating a minority complex amongst the Hindus. The swelling ranks of the Hindu communalists and their increasing militancy are, therefore, a consequence of a clearly thought-out and consistently pursued strategy. The complicity of distinct categories of persons in the communal game-plan, which is essentially anti-national, is indeed crystal-clear and without any shred of doubt whatsoever.

The power-hungry politicians belonging to the BJP and its other incarnations appear to be at the core of this communal game-plan. Unable to provide any viable alternative programme for India's socio-economic development, and keenly interested in following the shortest possible route to the avenues of power, these unscrupulous politicians have used religion as their main plank. For them religion is not a matter of faith; it is a weapon in politics. Having a Machiavellian approach to politics, they are not even averse to distorting religion and exploiting religious symbols for petty gains. For, the end justifies the means. They continue to exploit religion and religious myths and symbols, thus contributing to increasing communal polarisation. They know it very well that their political survival rests on that very polarisation.

Next to the politicians, there are a number of pseudo-intellectuals. These pseudo-intellectuals supply material to support communalism and thus make the job of the power-hungry politicians somewhat easier. In order to accomplish their task, these pseudo-intellectuals have distorted and invented history, floated concepts like "genuine secularism" and "genuine democracy", and have dubbed widely accepted concepts as "pseudo". The whole exercise undertaken by them bears a communal tinge, and is useful only for the communalists. However, in the process they have succeeded in gaining some recognition which has otherwise evaded most of them.

Alongwith the psuedo-intellectuals, there are *sadhus* who have a significant place in the communal game-plan. It appears strange and somewhat ironic that *sadhus* are found dabbling in politics. But that is what they are doing, knowingly or unknowingly. In fact their presence and involvement in the game-plan provides a halo or religious sanctity to the otherwise unsavoury communal activities. The unscrupulous politicians are in fact using them as pawns in their struggle for political power. The more active *sadhus* have probably found the glamour of public life more attractive than a secluded religious life. That is why they have successfully contested the elections and entered Parliament. It seems that the opportunity provided by the communal situation and their crucial position in the communal game-plan have enabled some *sadhus* to enjoy the limelight and even fulfil some political ambitions.

Then there are lumpen elements and criminals, used to perform acts of vandalism, an extreme example of which is the demolition of the Babri Masjid. Since the entire communal build-up is in the name of religion, criminals and vandals also do unlawful and socially objectionable acts in the name of religion. Hence, the so-called *kar sevaks* ganged up at Ayodhya, demolished the Babri Masjid, killed and injured Muslims and burnt their homes, brutally assaulted the journalists, and dealt with a female journalist in a highly uncivilised and inhuman manner. All in the name of religion. It would be interesting to know how many of the *Sangh Parivar* and its supporters have actually condemned or are prepared to condemn now at least the base behaviour of the so-called *kar sevaks* responsible for tormenting the lady journalist. Probably, they would describe the incident as "unfortunate" and feel they have fulfilled their responsibility. Normally, criminals and anti-social elements guilty of such excesses should be socially boycotted and legally punished. But it is clear that the *Sangh Parivar* is going to make heroes of the so-called *kar sevaks*[2]—those who have defiled the word *kar seva* itself by demolishing a place of worship. Hence while playing a noteable role in making the communal game-plan a success, the lumpen elements and criminals also gain something. They acquire respectability amongst certain sections of society—a kind of respectability which they can never enjoy in a different setting.

Lastly, there are sections of the common people; innocent but misguided. They have been brainwashed into believing that their salvation lies in supporting the communal game-plan. They are made to believe in the efiicacy of the communal ideology and programme in solving their problems.

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THE complicity of all these categories of persons contributed to the ultimate demolition of the Babri Masjid which itself demonstrated that the *Sangh Parivar* and its suporters have no respect for the rule of law, the democratic means of resolving conflict, and the state machinery. The indirect rejection of the concepts of liberty and equality is also evident in the lumpen behaviour and in support thereof. Sadly enough, the great betrayal also exposed their contempt for the judiciary.[3] That the leaders of the *Sangh Parivar* described the events of Ayodhya only as "unfortunate", that they failed or did not even try to find a more appropriate word, that they categorically refused to condemn the events, and that at least one of them readily called the events "*saubhagyapoorn*" instead of "*durbhagyapoorn*"[4] when pressurised by the lumpen elements in a gathering are all indications of the nature of things to come. They have no respect for the Constitution[5] and constitutional arrangements. They are acting against the Constitution and then defending their misdeeds; and they are doing so with impunity.

The kind of ideology they are propagating has no place for the centuries-old Indian traditions of pluralism, secularism and tolerance. They are visualising a "Hindu" India—"Hindu" by their own standards.

In order to make Hinduism subservient to their politics, the *Sangh Parivar* and its supporters have constantly been trying to misinterpret its basic tenets and introduce certain distortions in it. The consequence is that real Hinduism which is tolerant towards any number of ways of worshipping God, which believes in *ahimsa*, and which has faith in peaceful coexistence, faces a threat to its own survival. In an attempt to forge an artificial unity amongst the Hindus—which suits the communal brand of politics—sometimes extremely ridiculous steps are taken. One such step, hitherto unknown to Hinduism, was taken in the recent past when the President of the Delhi unit of the BJP gave a call to perform symbolic *kar seva* in Delhi, and urged the *kar sevaks* to face towards Ayodhya while doing the symbolic *kar seva.*[6] Implicit in the call was a desire to turn the so-called Ram Janmabhoomi into some sort of a *ka'aba*. This takes us to another interesting point. The tirade against Muslims by the *Sangh Parivar* and its supporters is suggestive of the utmost contempt with which they treat Muslims and Islam. Nevertheless, they have been trying to mould Hinduism with some of Islam's features as their ideals. First, they glorified one God and one religious text—as Islam glorifies *Allah* and the *Qur'an*—and now they are trying to create a *ka'aba* for Hindus.

The politics of the *Sangh Parivar* and its supporters, and the ideas disseminated by them pose a serious challenge to peace and law and order in the country. They are pursuing and promoting a policy of conflict and confrontation which is bound to lead to violence now and then. In the given situation one cannot rule out the possibility of irrational and emotional responses from some sections of Muslims. In fact we have been a witness to a display of such response just after the demolition of the mosque. The demolition of the Babri Masjid is being interpreted by many as a failure of the political system to deliver the goods. Many Muslims have developed a sense of disappointment and despondency. The more dejected ones have lost their faith in the system. This, in all probability, is a passing phase; but the gravity of this phase cannot be ignored. In the face of the continuing offensive of the *Sangh Parivar* and its supporters, some terrorist-like outfits claiming to be the guardians of the so-called "Muslim interest" may also spring up. This will obviously aggravate the situation further. The resources of the country will have to be diverted to the maintenance of law and order, which means that the economy will suffer and economic growth will be retarded.

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THE tragic events which have taken place, the danger of a more serious and comprehensive crisis involving threats to the survival of the constitutional structure, traditions, culture and values of the country, and the defiled image of India in the outside world—all call for immediate corrective action. The open and forceful condemnation of vandalism at Ayodhya by a considerably large number of well-meaning persons and organisations, and by almost all political parties excepting the BJP and Shiv Sena convey a message, loud and clear, that the Hindu communalists cannot take their momentary success as their final victory. The forward march of the communal forces can be arrested. However, it should be stated that a lasting solution to the problem of communalism—Hindu, Muslim or any other—will involve thorough socio-economic and political changes, and the process may take decades. Until such a solution comes about, constant and careful management of the communal situation is warranted. This management demands effective intervention by the state; and more than that, by the saner elements in the country.

The state has to intervene and take effective steps with a view to fulfulling two clear-cut objectives. One, those who have held the state and its institutions in contempt have to be shown that the state does exist; and that it does so to uphold the law of the land. None of the guilty should go unpunished; so that people do not take law in their own hands in future. This is possible only when the government of the day does not succumb to the pressures of the fundamentalist, fascist and anti-national forces. Secondly, those who have lost their faith in the state should be given a clear message about the impartiality and efficacy of the state. The steps necessary to convey this message should be taken forthwith. This will ask for a quick fulfilment of the commitments and promises made by the government after the Ayodhya incidents. In fact all this requires an extraordinarily strong political will. The current situation urges the government to muster courage to let its action be guided by the concern for India's present and future, and not by electoral calculations.

An intervention by the saner elements in the country is the greater need of the hour. Such elements belonging to all political parties, socio-cultural organisations and groups as well as those who do not belong to any of them must realise their responsibility. Only marches or assemblies for peace, communal harmony and goodwill will not do. A detailed programme of mass contact and secularisation should be charted out. The ugly face of the communalists should be unveiled and their devilish designs exposed.

The National Front, the Left Front and the Congress must realise the consequences of infight in the broadly secular and democratic camp. They must realise the urgency of the need for a frontal attack on the BJP and its allies. They must think in terms of realignment of forces, and must join hands at least for a minimum programme for protecting secularism and fighting aginst communalism.

One last point needs to be added. The turn of events has undoubtedly made the forces of Hindu communalism the main villain. However, communalism of other religious groups should not go unspared. ■

Notes and References

1. Sant Vamdev and Swami Muktananda Saraswati said in a press conference: "Those people who on December 6 demolished the disputed structure, have done a commendable act and have started a process of wiping out the black spots and blemishes of Mughal aggression from the face of our motherland." See *The Times of India* (New Delhi), December 26, 1992. The Shiv Sena supremo, Bal Thackeray, is also reported to have said: "If I could have been the Prime Minister of this country, I would have demolished it long back, not leaving it to my party workers or Shiv Sainiks. I would have done it officially. But since they have done it, well, I have said it already. I am proud of them." See *The Times of India* (New Delhi), January 15, 1993. Also see the statement of the BJP President, Dr Murli Monohar Joshi, who reportedly said that "his party had no regrets over the demolition of the Babri Masjid..." See *Indian Express*, January 25, 1993.
2. The BJP Vice-President, S.S. Bhandari, said that "*kar sevaks* who were responsible for the demolition would be 'special guests' during public meetings addressed by the BJP leaders" for mobilising public support in favour of the party's stand. See *The Sunday Times* (New Delhi), December 27, 1992.
3. Dr Murli Manohar Joshi said that "none could demolish the present structure at the disputed site even if the Supreme Court ruled that a masjid be constructed in the disputed place." See *Indian Express* (New Delhi), January 25, 1993.
4. "Party MP, M.L. Khurana, was hooted and jeered when he termed the demolition as a *durbhagyapurna* (unfortunate) event and was forced to revise it to *saubhagyapurna* (fortunate) event." See *The Sunday Times* (New Delhi), December 27, 1992.
5. See the report titled "Sants blame the Constitution" in *The Times of India* (New Delhi), December 26, 1992.
6. See *The Times of India* (New Delhi), December 6, 1992.

Seventythird Amendment Bill: Tasks Ahead

MAHIPAL

Panchayats were considered an integral part of the philosophy of *Purn Swaraj* and *Gram Swaraj* cherished by the Father of the Nation. It has, therefore, been a legacy of India's freedom struggle. After independence several attempts were made, though half-heartedly, to introduce Panchayati Raj in the country. The Community Development Programme (1952) followed by the National Extension Service were efforts by the government towards community development without the involvement of the people.

In order to bring about people's participation the Government of India constituted the Balwantrai Mehta Team (1957), the Asoka Mehta Committee (1977), the G.V.K. Rao Committee (1985) and the Singhvi Committee (1986) to suggest ways and means to realise the objective. These Committees had recommended establishing and strengthening of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). Based on the recommendations of the Balwantrai Mehta Committee Report the State Governments established the PRIs. Subsequently, there were attempts in States like West Bengal, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Kerala to further strengthen the PRIs. As these institutions could not get the constitutional status they remained at the mercy of the State Government.

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The passing of the Constitutional Amendment Bill by Parliament has opened a new era in decentralisation of power in the country. But to make the decentralisation meaningful the foremost task for the State Governments is to implement land reforms. In this connection there are two significant questions. First, to whom the power is to be given—the powerless or the powerful? And second, from where will the resources come for financing the development works assigned to these bodies? Another question to be considered is: if the PRIs are to be successful, are they viable in terms of population, area and finance?

This paper attempts briefly to give the salient features of the present Bill which got the approval of both the Houses of Parliament and the tasks ahead in terms of land reforms and viability.

Bill's journey from Rajiv Gandhi's Government till date

In May 1989, the government headed by the then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, introduced the Constitutional (Sixtyfourth) Amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha in order to incorporate in the Constitution certain essential provisions for making the Panchayati Raj Institutions statutory bodies. The Bill was passed in the Lok Sabha in August 1989. However, it was defeated in the Rajya Sabha in October 1989.

In 1990 the new government took a fresh view on the subject and after consultation with the Chief Ministers another Constitution Amendment Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha in September 1990. The V.P. Singh Government's Constitution (Seventyfourth) Amendment Bill could not be taken up for consideration as the Lok Sabha was dissolved on November 7, 1990.

In 1991 as soon as the present government came to power at the Centre, on the basis of the recommendations of a group of Ministers, the Constitution (Seventysecond Amendment) Bill 1991 was introduced in the Lok Sabha on September 16, 1991. In December 1991 the Bill was referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee for examination. Based on its recommendations and a general consensus a revised Constitution (Seventysecond Amendment) Bill 1991 was piloted which was finally passed by Parliament on December 22, 1992 as the Constitution (Seventythird) Amendment Bill.

Salient Features

The Constitution (Seventythird) Amendment Bill gives certain powers to the PRIs to make them truly representative bodies of the people. The main features of the new amendments are: (i) formation of gram sabhas; (ii) uniform three-tier system at village, block and district levels with exemption for intermediate level in States with population less than two million; (iii) direct election to all seats for all members at all levels; (iv) indirect election of the Chairmen at intermediate and apex levels while mode of election for the lowest level is left to the State; (v) voting rights to the MPs and MLAs; (vi) twentyone years as the minimum age for members as well as the Chairman; (vii) reservation on rotational basis for SCs and STs in proportion to their population both for membership as well as Chairmen of the panchayats; (viii) reservation of not less than one-third of the seats for women; (ix) five-year term; (x) in case of supersession or dissolution fresh elections within six months; (xi) devolution of powers and responsibilities by the State in the preparation and implementation of development plans; (xii) sound financial arrangement through tax, grant-in-aid, levy, fees, etc; (xiii) setting up of the Finance Commission once in five years to review the financial position of these institutions and to make suitable recommendations to the State on the distribution of funds among panchayats; (xiv) provision for the maintenance of accounts and auditing of such accounts; (xv) holding of elections under the superintendence, direction and control of the Chief Electoral Officer of the State.

Although these provisions will apply to the Union Territories, certain North-Eastern States and areas like Darjeeling will be excluded from its application. The Eleventh Schedule containing a list of 29 items will be entrusted to the PRIs. The amendment will become part of the Constitution after 13 States ratify it and the President gives assent to it.

Tasks Ahead

Although the Bill does not give these institutions the status of self-government as the law and order is kept out of the purview of these bodies, it is a major step towards devolving power to the people. Now the important task is to make this provision more effective to benefit all segments of the rural population. For this other two steps—that is, land reforms and viability of panchayats in the context of their population and areas for a sound resource base—are to be taken up immediately for proper and meaningful decentralisation. Let us take them one by one.

Land Reforms

The RBI's All India Debt and Investment Surveys over a period of three decades 1961, 1971 and 1981 show that the bottom 39 per cent of the rural households owned five per cent of the assets as against the top five per cent owning 46 per cent of the assets. The 1981-82 report further reveals that the households having an asset of Rs 1000 and below drew only about 23 per cent credit from the institutional sources as against about 83 per cent drawn by the households having assets of Rs 5 lakhs and above.

Furthermore, the latest All India Report on Agricultural Census (1985-86) says that marginal farmers—about 58 per cent of the total farmers—cultivate only about 13 per cent of the total 'operational' area. This is the profile of the countryside which is so skewed. In such a situation, decentralisation means empowering the powerful.

West Bengal's example in this regard is worth mentioning. There, after land reforms, 75 per cent of the members and Chairmen of the three-tier structure were small and marginal farmers. Therefore, for making participatory development meaningful disparities have to be lessened. About *swaraj* Mahatma Gandhi once said: "Real *swaraj* will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused." And this can happen only if we lessen the economic disparities.

Viability of Panchayats

Viability of the panchayats in terms of population and geographical area is of paramount importance. This is important for sustaining a sound resource base for village development. This aspect has been stressed time and again by several experts and committees for the last several years but nothing worthwhile has been done in this regard. V.K.R.V. Rao was of the view that villages having a population of about 5000 should form the unit area for development purposes. The Asoka Mehta Committee Report recommended that about 78 per cent of the villages have population less than 1000 and that population size and the panchayats do not go well functionally due to their poor resource base. Therefore, the Committee's suggestion was that mandal panchayat population should be from the 15,000 to 20,000 with the purpose of making them viable for taking up economic activities and effective people's participation.

Further, another study by D.V. Raghav Rao had pointed out that the minimum population size of the panchayat should be about 4000 for purposeful planning. The Singhvi Committee's (1986) recommendation—that "villages may ~~be~~ organised... grouped and enlarged in order to make for viable village panchayats and enlarged villages should continue to be the primary and homogenous units of self-government with a measure of direct democracy"—underlines the basic principle. It was of the opinion that ideally village panchayats should have a population of 5000 or less but the demographic size is only one of the relevant aspects. Identity, continuity, contiguous homogeneity, communication and techno-economic, the demographic and cultural factors are other factors to be taken into account.

Panchayats cannot expect too much resources from the States because they themselves are already in chronic financial difficulties. Besides, in the atmosphere of liberalisation where economic decisions are based on market forces and profit motive, resource mobilisation for economic activities at the local level is to be done by the panchayats. For mobilising the scarce resources, decentralised planning taking into account the appropriate hierarchical levels for different central functions determined by the threshold and distance norm should be operationalised throughout the country.

Conclusion

To conclude, the Bill is no doubt a historic step in the direction of devolution of political and economic power to the grassroots level. For making it meaningful the prevailing large scale disparities in the countryside have to be lessened. Then only effective participation of the people in development will become a reality.

Secondly, for making the economic base of the panchayats sound, they should be reorganised to have a minimum population of 5000. However, the success of decentralisation depends on the States and the people themselves. Our experience about decentralisation has been that the initiative had come from the top and not from the grassroots.

It may be mentioned here that India needed a strong centralised power to hold it together at the time of independence. Now it needs to decentralise to keep itself from falling apart. ■

From Neva to Beas : Story of the Roerichs

RAVI M. BAKAYA

Svyatoslav Roerich's death in Bangalore on January 30, 1993, brings down the curtain on the life and times of a remarkable Russian family who had made India their home.

I came to know about Nikolai Roerich over half a century ago. I had joined a group of students from Bombay who had come to Lahore to go on a trekking tour of the beautiful hills of Kangra and Kulu. They were accompanied by their erstwhile school teacher and friend, K. Krishna Menon. Others in the group were Arvind Mehta and his two sisters Praveena and Malvika and their friend Premji Pandhi. They had all seen an exhibition of the paintings of Nikolai Roerich which had become the talk of the town in Bombay.

Kulu valley was in those days a haven of natural unspoilt beauty. The Roerichs lived in Nagar, not far from Kulu town, and we decided to visit them. We climbed up to the beautiful Roerich estate in Nagar and were astounded at what we saw. Perched high in the hills was a truly Russian villa which seemed to have been physically transported there, as if by magic. Nikolai Roerich with his close-fitting skull-cap and spade-shaped white beard looked like an ancient seer. His wife Yelena Ivanovna was a typical Russian woman too—right out of old paintings. We also met their elder son Yuri Nikolaevich. The younger son, Svyatoslav, a painter like his father, was then not in Kulu. (I met him years later in 1977 in Moscow in the house of Sangal, First Secretary in our embassy in charge of education, who had invited him and his wife, Devika Rani.)

The Roerichs' two-storeyed villa in Nagar overlooked the river Beas, one of the five rivers which gave Punjab its name. It was in Kulu that the legendary *rishi* Vyas wrote the epic *Mahabharata* on palm leaves. The villa was surrounded by greenery and the captivating view of the snowy Himalayas from their balcony let out the secret of the bewitching Himalayan landscapes painted by Nikolai Roerich. The family did not lead an isolated life here. They joined the Kulu valley people in their festivities, helped them in various ways, wrote down their songs and legends. They rose with the morning sun and had their daily routine cut out. While Nikolai Roerich and son Svyatoslav worked at their easels, Yelena Ivanovna collected Oriental legends and parables. Yuri was an Orientalist too and Director of the Roerich Institute of Himalayan Studies, which was housed in a separate two-storeyed building nearby. We were taken there and were astounded to see the rich collection of Himalayan herbs, art objects, manuscripts and books on the history, legends, philosophy and flora and fauna of the region in this remote corner of India.

Nor were the Roerichs cut off from the rest of the world outside. From here they ventured out repeatedly on their many expeditions which took them to all parts of Asia and Europe and even to far off America. From their home in Kulu valley they managed to keep in touch with scholars, artists and philosophers everywhere.

It was years later that I could acquire and read E. Polyakova's fine biography of Nikolai Roerich, published in Russian in Moscow in 1985. It told me a lot about the family I had visited half a century ago as a teenager.

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NIKOLAI ROERICH'S ancestors came from Scandinavia long years ago and settled down in St. Petersburg, the city built by Peter the Great on the banks of the river Neva. It was here that the noted artist and savant was born on September 27, 1874. Interestingly, the Roerich's house in Russia's then capital city was called 'Izvara' by its former owner, Count Vorontsov, who had visited India where he heard the word *Ishwara* which he understood to mean 'the Lord's mercy'. He named his estate in Tsarskoe Selo 'Izvara', perhaps the way he pronounced the Indian word he liked so much. I was shown this house in Leningrad by my late friend Viktor Balin, who headed the Department of Indian Philology in Leningrad University. The name 'Izvara' still stood engraved on the gates.

In his school days Nikolai Roerich got interested in botany and bird life in St. Petersburg *gubernia* and started writing, mainly on themes connected with nature. Later, when he studied Roman Law at the university, Roerich got interested seriously in painting and began attending classes in the Art Academy where among his professors were the famous realistic artists Repin, Shishkin, Makovsky and Kuindzhi.

In 1897 Repin noted Roerich as one of the best students of the Academy. His painting, 'The Messenger', brought him accolades and was bought by a well known art connoisseur at an exhibition. The famous painter Stasov brought young Nikolai Roerich to Moscow and introduced him to Leo Tolstoy, who liked his work. Roerich graduated from the university in 1898 and became assistant secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Arts. A jurist and an artist by education, a historian and archaeologist by profession, Nikolai Roerich's horizon of interests kept widening.

After his father's death in 1900, Nikolai Roerich went to Paris where he rented a studio. His paintings began to be exhibited in international exhibitions like those of the great masters like Repin and Vasnetsov. He returned to St. Petersburg with a large number of canvases. In 1901 he married Yelena Ivanovna Shaposhnikova, the daughter of an architect. In August 1902 their first son, Yuri, was born and in 1904 the second son, Svyatoslav. Nikolai Roerich's interest in archaeology grew. He became a member of the Archaeological Society and took part in many excursions and excavations. In 1904 the Society for the Propagation of the Arts arranged an exhibition of his paintings done during his numerous excursions through Russia. The same year 83 of his sketches were sent to the United States for exhibition. Many of them were retained by the museums of San Francisco, New York and Boston. He became a Councillor of State and in 1909 an Academician-Member of the Russian Academy of Arts. Earlier, in 1906, he had been appointed Director of the School of the Society for the Propagation of the Arts.

Nikolai Roerich travelled to Finland, which was then part of the Russian empire, and also made frequent trips to France, Italy, Switzerland and Germany. In Paris he met the famous Russian Indologist, V.V. Golubev, who told him about India. Roerich began to dream of going to the fabled land with which he felt a natural affinity. In an essay, 'Passage to India', he wrote:

> At night Indian women gather on the shores of dark lakes, their delicate bells ringing. They are calling the sacred tortoises from the depth of the water. They feed them. They place candles in nut-shells and float them on the lake. They are guessing their fortune, telling the future. Beauty lives in India. The road to India beckons.

In years to come, Roerich came close to many famous writers and poets—among them Bryusov and Blok. In 1914 the first volume of his selected works was published, but the second was not fated to come out—World War I had started. Nikolai Roerich was closely connected with the theatre as a painter and decorator. Among his many admirers was K.S. Stanislavsky who wrote to him in 1913,

> I press your hand and continue to dream that I shall one day be able to work with you.

Roerich became a close friend of Maxim Gorky, especially after the February 1917 Revolution. On March 4, 1917 Gorky invited many artists, writers and actors and proposed a commission to be sent to the Smolny Institute. The 'flower of intelligentsia' was represented in the commission, among them Gorky himself, the famed singer Shalyapin, Nikolai Roerich and many others. Two days later, on March 6, members of the commission were received by the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of Petrograd. The appeal of the commission to protect the art treasures of Russia, which was signed by the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, said:

> Citizens! The old masters are gone, leaving behind a great heritage. It now belongs to the entire people. Citizens, protect this heritage....the paintings, sculptures, buildings—these are the embodiment of the spiritual strength of your ancestors...Don't touch a single stone, protect the monuments, buildings, old objects, documents—all this is your history, your pride. Remember, all this is the soil on which your new people's art will grow.

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IN the autumn of 1917 Nikolai Roerich went to Finland, to Serdobol (Sortavala), as he was gravely ill with pneumonia. His mother, brothers and sisters remained in Petrograd. Times were difficult. They had to gradually sell off their furniture and other things in order to survive. Nikolai Roerich slowly recovered his health in Sortavala. Here in 1918 he wrote a story *The Flame* and a play *Charity*. The finale of the play, in which anxiety for his country and faith in its future mingle together, ends with Tagore's immortal words:

> Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high,
> Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls,
> Where words come out from the depths of truth;
> Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
> Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
> Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action—
> Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

His story *The Flame* ends with words taken from the eleventh chapter of *Bhagwadgita*.

The road to Russia was closed by the Civil War between the Reds and the Whites. The road to India was either through the Urals and Siberia or through England. The former was also closed to the Roerichs.

In 1918 the Roerichs left for London, taking with them Nikolai Roerich's canvases and writings. They spurned the offer of citizenship by many countries and continued to call themselves citizens of Russia. After the success of some of his exhibitions in Scandinavia, Nikolai Roerich was able to exhibit his work in England, where he met Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore told him, "Your art is independent, because it is great." And he invited the artist to India. But it would take the Roerichs a few more years to reach Tagore's homeland.

In 1920 the Roerichs reached America and spent the next three years—from September 1920 to May 1923—in the New World. Nikolai Roerich was already well known here. They did not face any language barrier as they spoke freely in French, German and English. Nikolai Roerich continued to paint and he lectured on culture in 28 States of the USA. In 1921 he set up an "Institute of United Arts" in New York. In 1923 New York saw the opening of a Roerich Museum to which President Coolidge sent a message. It was later to be housed on 310 Riverside Drive. Three hundred paintings of the "celebrated master" were exhibited here.

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ON April 19, 1923 Nikolai Roerich wrote to his mother in Petrograd:

> In two-and-a-half weeks we move from here to Paris, and from there in autumn to Bombay. We expect to be in India for about two years.

At the beginning of December 1923 newspapers reported the arrival in Bombay of the well known Russian artist Nikolai Roerich.

The entire Roerich family had been in a way preparing for their Indian sojourn. Yelena Ivanovna was interested in Tagore and Indian philosophy like her husband. Yuri and Svyatoslav had mastered many languages. On arrival in London, Yuri had joined the School of Oriental Languages of the London University. Later he studied at Harvard and Paris, where he worked under well known professors on China and Tibet. His articles on art appeared in French journals. In 1923 he got his Master's degree in Indian philology from Sorbonne. According to Nikolai Roerich's biographer, E. Polyakova, "Yuri was a born polyglot and linguist. He had an absolute ear for languages as some have for music." But he was no narrow philologist. He had inherited from his distinguished father respect for the culture of Asian peoples, culture in the broadest sense, which includes the habits, art, religion and, in general, the way of life of the people.

The younger son, Svyatoslav, had inherited from his father interest in art and was a painter. He had studied architecture at Harvard and then at Columbia University and in 1923 taken part in the international exhibition in Philadelphia. He too was a student of Asian languages.

In India the artist and his family travelled to all parts of the country, saw Ajanta and Ellora, the magnificent temples of the South, Delhi, Agra, Jaipur, Calcutta and Darjeeling. They also visited Sikkim, saw Buddhist monasteries. Nikolai Roerich painted the great Himalayas. Later, his canvases and books were to be called justifiably a "hymn to the Himalayas".

From the hills the Roerichs returned to Calcutta. Then in 1924 we find them again in Europe with all the material about Himalayas they had collected. Though the means of travel in those days were nothing like today's jet planes, we find the Roerichs easily hopping from India to America and thence to Europe.

In December 1924, Nikolai Roerich telephoned the Soviet Embassy in Berlin and wanted to see the political representative of the Soviet Government, Nikolai Nikolaevich Krestinsky. The Russian diplomat granted him an interview in the course of which Roerich told him that he was organising a large expedition under the American flag and requested the protection of the Russian diplomatic missions in Central Asia. He related to the Soviet diplomat his impressions of India and Tibet and told him how the British were carrying on propaganda against the northern neighbour, the Soviet Union, spreading rumours about religious persecution and alleged discrimination against the national minorities of Turkestan. Roerich spoke like a seasoned international observer. And then he switched over to an inspired speech about Russia's mission, about the *mahatmas* preaching the unity of communist Russia with the enormous Buddhist world in a single community, about the fundamental teachings of Buddhism and communism. And he asked for visas and passports for his expedition members. He said he had already received a Chinese passport in Paris with permission to travel to Sinkiang.

Roerich's request was forwarded by Krestinsky to the Soviet Foreign Minister, Chicherin, alongwith notes on his meeting with the artist. Chicherin was one of the great intellectuals of the early Soviet period (like the Minister of Education, Lunacharsky). When he read the transcript of Krestinsky's interview with Roerich, he exclaimed: "Half Communist, half Buddhist!" He wrote to Krestinsky to give Roerich all possible assistance.

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THE Roerichs started the year 1925 with a tour of Ceylon, where they saw more Buddhist shrines. They continued their preparations for the expedition from India to Central Asia. It was to travel under the American flag and its aims were defined as "artistic-archaeological". The leader, Nikolai Roerich, was himself a well known artist, archaeologist and historian, his wife Yelena Ivanovna was studying Oriental philosophy and folklore, eldest son Yuri was a specialist in the languages and dialects of Asia and he wanted to test the knowledge he had acquired at Harvard and Sorbonne and to reinforce his book-learning with living experience. The younger son, Svyatoslav, could not join the expedition as he was continuing his studies in America.

The expedition started from Kashmir. On September 18, 1925 Nikolai Roerich made an entry in his diary which gives a vivid picture of Kashmir under the double yoke of the British and the Maharaja:

> At last we are leaving behind the falsehood and squalor of Kashmir...One can forget how the victors play at polo and golf while the people die in epidemics and complete stupor. One can leave behind the corrupt officials of Kashmir...One can forget the government of censored letters and parcels and of spies.... What have they done to India and Kashmir? You feel yourself safe only in the mountains. It is only in the deserts that you can leave ignorance behind...

The Roerichs spent two months in Leh, the principal town of Ladakh. Their small expedition crossed from Ladakh into Chinese Turkestan traversing the 5070 metre high Sanju Pass. Nikolai Roerich did not approach the British Consul in these parts. He requested the Soviet Consul at Kashgar for help. However, the Chinese local authorities arrested the expedition on New Year Day 1926. Nikolai Roerich sent three identical letters from Khotan to Kashgar, hoping that at least one would reach the Soviet Consul. All three reached their destination. The Consul informed the Foreign Minister, Chicherin, about what had happened and that Roerich's letters to Paris, London, New York and Peking had brought no response. The European and American press reported about the mysterious disappearance of the expedition led by the famous artist Nikolai Roerich. Chicherin asked the Soviet Consul to take up the matter with the Chinese authorities tactfully. The Roerichs were not Soviet citizens and the expedition was under the American flag. There was no American consulate at Kashgar. It was only on February 13 that the Roerichs reached Kashgar. Their first visit on arrival was not to the Governor but to the Soviet Consul. From Kashgar, Yelena Ivanovna wrote:

> It was with great joy that we read the *Izvestiya*. There is fine construction work going on there. We were especially touched by the respect with which Lenin's name is mentioned here. In fact this is a new country and the great Lenin's teachings light it up like the dawn...As I write these lines I can hear the bells of the caravans outside the window, going to Andijan, to the new country. It is difficult to get horses—everyone is going there...

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IT was in Kashgar that the Roerichs decided finally to visit the Soviet Union, a dream they had long dreamt. Nikolai Roerich asked the Soviet Consul to get them permission to enter the USSR. He wanted to go to the frontier post of Kuldzhi and there "to suddenly disappear", that is, get into Soviet territory. On April 11, the expedition entered Urumchi, the capital of Sinkiang. Roerich immediately got in touch with the Soviet Consul here. April 22 was Lenin's birth anniversary and the workers of the consulate wished to put up a bust of Lenin in front of the building. The Consul requested Roerich to draw a sketch for the pedestal of the bust. The artist sat through the night and by morning the sketch was ready.

On the eve of May Day, Nikolai Roerich brought his diary to the Soviet Consul for safe custody. He thought anything might happen on the way. On May 6, Foreign Minister Chicherin telegraphed, granting permission for entry visas. They got their visas on May 6 and Roerich, Yelena Ivanovna and Yuri set off for the border on May 8. They crossed into the USSR on May 29 and took a train for Moscow from Omsk, reaching the Soviet capital in early June. In Moscow they stayed at the Grand Hotel.

Chicherin granted Nikolai Roerich an interview. The Foreign Minister remembered the artist from his St. Petersburg days. Roerich presented some of his paintings to Chicherin, among them "The Coming of Time", "Buddha, the Victor", "Whispers of the Desert" and "Banner of the Future". Later, in the thirties, these paintings were presented to Gorky by the Minister of Education and Culture, Lunacharsky, another great intellectual figure from Lenin's days. Roerich also met Lunacharsky and talked to him about an exhibition of his paintings in Moscow. However, this idea could not then materialise. After all, Roerich was head of an American expedition who had come through British India and Chinese Sinkiang; he was not a Soviet citizen. He had to go back to India, then perhaps to his Riverside museum in the USA. This was then the line of thinking in the Soviet Government.

In August 1926 the Roerichs took the Trans-Siberian Express on their way back. Before leaving Moscow Nikolai Roerich sent a letter to New York which was ceremoniously read out on November 17, 1926 on the third anniversary of the opening of the Roerich Museum. In his letter he talked about the friendly feelings of the Soviet people for Americans and the warm reception given to their expedition. He ended his letter thus: "Greetings from people to people! We shall soon leave our train to once again join a caravan."

The expedition travelled through the entire territory of Russia to Mongolia and thence to Tibet. After many adventures they finally reached the Marco Polo Mountain Range and came to the Tibetan border post. Here their passports were taken away and they got stuck for five whole months, at the height of more than 15,000 feet, spending the entire winter in tents. Lhasa turned down their request to enter the Holy City and see the Dalai Lama, the Living Buddha. In March, April and May they travelled from Tibet to Nepal. In spite of all the hardships and uncertainties, Nikolai Roerich did not stop painting and writing. They returned to Gangtok, capital of Sikkim, and were hospitably received. On May 28, 1928, five years after they had set off on their expedition, they entered Darjeeling from the north.

As his biographer, E. Polyakova, says:

> Nikolai Rerich lived in hotels throughout the world, in villas, in caravans, inns, Mongolian yurts, in the huts of Old Believers, in mud, brick and bamboo shacks and in tents. Home was where they stopped, where Nikolai Roerich could set up his easel, where he could write in the light of a field lamp.

But they needed a permanent dwelling place—where they could return from their expeditions, where they could keep the paintings, books and their collections. The Roerichs did not want to live either in Europe or America. They wanted to settle down in a country they felt was their own. From December 1928 Kulu became their permanent home and they settled down in Nagar, about 2000 metres above sea level. Here they established "Uruswati", their Institute of Himalayan Studies. From here Nikolai Roerich kept up correspondence with many notable people in all quarters of the world, including Academician Vavilov, President of the USSR Academy of Sciences. He travelled to New York twice, in 1929 and 1934, to the Roerich Museum. After 1934 there were no more visits to the USA. In 1934-35 he and son Yuri went on an extended scientific expedition to the Philippines, Japan, China, Inner Mongolia and Manchuria. From here Nikolai Roerich carried on his work to protect art treasures throughout the world. As his biographer writes:

> Roerich kept away from political struggle, from the idea of social reformation of the world. His outlook was closer to the worldview of Tolstoy and Gandhi. He called for not surrender but resistance to evil, in support of his idea of 'global justice'. He said, 'Light does not struggle with darkness, it lights up, pushes back darkness.'

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ON Nikolai Roerich's initiative jurists worked out in 1929 his Pact of Peace. The Roerich Pact, as it came to be called, requires the signatory countries to deposit in the International Court at the Hague, or the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation in Paris, or in the Education Department of the All-American Union in Washington, a list of the institutions, collections and missions—official or private—which should be put under protection. The Pact was placed before the Committee dealing with Museums of the League of Nations and was approved in 1930. The Roerich Pact for the protection of art treasures was signed by many governments.

Nikolai Roerich often ended his articles with the Sanskrit words *shivam, satyam, sundaram*—peace, truth and beauty. This was the motto that guided all his literary and social activities.

In Kulu Roerich painted hundreds of canvases which pictured images from the Buddhist philosophy and religion, tales and legends of the Orient, pictures from the life-style of the mountain people and many other subjects. However, the main thing in his paintings are the mountains in the midst of which the Roerichs lived. He is the unmatched painter of the Himalayas.

Roerich wrote many books in the Kulu valley. He also kept a detailed diary. The family closely followed events in the USSR, especially after the German attack in 1941. An exhibition of Nikolai Roerich's paintings was held in Bombay. Nikolai Roerich donated all the earnings from the sale of his paintings to the Red Army's fund. In 1942 an American-Russian Cultural Association was founded in the USA and Nikolai Roerich was elected its honorary President. He appealed for help to Russia. In this same year Jawaharlal Nehru, accompanied by daughter Indira, visited the Roerichs in the Kulu valley. Svyatoslav Roerich painted a portrait of Nehru during this visit.

When the War ended, the Roerichs decided to return to Russia. They packed all the canvases and their books and manuscripts into crates to take them home, to the country they had left in 1918. However, Nikolai Roerich was not fated to see his country again. He fell seriously ill in summer and died on December 15, 1947—in free India. His body was cremated in the garden of his beloved Himalayan home. The stone which marks the place of cremation has engraved on it the date of his death in both the Hindu and Christian calendars: Marghashirsha 30, 2004 and December 15, 1947. The words "Om Ram" are also engraved on the stone. The other members of the Roerich family had to wait ten long years to return. These years they spent in Bombay and near Calcutta. Yelena Ivanovna died near Calcutta in 1951 and was buried on the slopes of a hill where a stupa-shaped memorial marks her grave.

At last the paintings were loaded on a ship sailing for Odessa. Accompanying them were the elder son Yuri Nikolaevich and other members of the family. In Russia the exhibition of these paintings attracted thousands of citizens. In 1960, Yuri Nikolaevich Roerich handed over 350 works of his father to the Russian Museum of Leningrad and sixty to the picture gallery of Novosibirsk, where a permanent Roerich exhibition was opened. Nikolai Roerich's paintings hang in museums and art galleries all over Russia today.

Some of the paintings of his father were seen on the walls of the modest flat of Yuri Nikolaevich on Leninsky Prospekt. There were also a lot of books in the flat. But the main collection of their rare books on India, Tibet and Mongolia Yuri Nikolaevich presented to the library of the Institute of Oriental Studies, where he headed a department. Yuri Nikolaevich worked hard, trained many young specialists, guided research scholars and prepared the *Dhammapada* for publication in Russian. His own works had been published in New York, Paris, Prague, London and in India and he now prepared them for publication in Russia.

Yuri Nikolaevich died suddenly on May 21, 1960 of a massive heart attack. He was cremated and his ashes buried in the famous Novodevichie cemetry in Moscow. His room in the Institute of Oriental Studies has been carefully preserved.

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SVYATOSLAV ROERICH settled down in Bangalore with his wife Devika Rani. They often visited Russia and his paintings were exhibited in art galleries there. He was made an honorary member of the Academy of Arts of the USSR. He often visited the Roerich memorial in Kulu. Svyatoslav Roerich's portraits of Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Jawaharlal Nehru, besides those of his wife and his illustrious father have been acclaimed internationally. Several of his paintings hang in Parliament House and in Rashtrapati Bhavan. He was made a Fellow of the Lalit Kala Akademi and was conferred the Padmabhushan in 1961.

The works of Nikolai and Svyatoslav Roerich have been brought out in Russian. Among the many published works of Nikolai Roerich was his book of travels *Altai-Himalaya.* Of Nikolai Roerich's paintings Jawaharlal Nehru had said:

> When you look at these canvases, many of which portray the Himalayas, it seems that you capture the spirit of these great mountains. For centuries they have stood over the valleys and have been our frontier guards. These paintings remind us of so much in our history, our thinking, our cultural and spiritual

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Secularism and Social Transformation in India

RASHEEDUDDIN KHAN

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I: The Context of Socio-Economic Transformation

Four-and-a-half decades of national independence is an appropriate occasion to reflect on the nature of the contemporary Indian polity that has emerged. We must examine the contradictions and conflicting interests that beset it in the process of the gigantic socio-economic transformation of our continental federal polity.

In the time-scale of history of such an ancient land like India, spanning five millennia of continuous civilisation, 45 years would appear a small, even a negligible and an inconsequential period of time, not worthy of any reckoning. But in the dynamic phase of our contemporary times marked by incremental revolution, exponential curve and telescopic changes these very 45 years appear as a recognisable epoch, a watershed, a nodal point of transformation in the annals of our five thousand years of continuing existence.

A new civilisation is emerging in India, around a new polity, by the interaction of different, sometimes opposing and sometime converging, set of forces and factors, domestic and global, in a highly interdependent world setting. An ancient society is getting transformed into a modern polity, at a time when national isolation is an impossibility, and global interdependence a major reality specially for a geopolitically strategic country that stands on the crossroads of international transactions.

India is one of the world's most complex plural society. The complexity of India is basically a function of its 'size' and 'scale'. The subcontinental polity, in the past as in the present, acquires its defined personality essentially as an agglomeration of regions and sub-regions. This has been recognised throughout the centuries as evidenced, for instance, in the *Vayu Purana*, the *Ain-i-Akbari*, the *Imperial Gazeteers of India*, the reports of the pre-independence National Planning Committee (presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru), and in the several relevant documents of the Planning Commission of India after independence. It is around these well-defined socio-economic sub-regions (about 60 to 70) that distinctive sub-national communities (but *not* nationalities) exist, whose indices of inclusive identity can be measured in terms of specific *jati*-formations, tribal patterns, religious communities and sects, dialects and literary heritage, variations in common beliefs and rituals and in the manner in which classics of myths and wisdom like the *Ramayan, Mahabharat* and the *Gita* and the wide rangeof *Puranas* and folklore are interpreted together with peculiarities of culture-pattern, folk music, dance and drama, familial and inter-familial ties, and local history, etc. The roots of socio-cultural federalism in India are very deep, even as the framework of political federalism is still in a process of evolution of change, seeking to acquire a stable shape and form under democratic dispensation.

India's continental territorial dimension and its teeming millions constituting one-fifth of humanity, introduces the factor of 'scale' in any discussion of the Indian reality. The length of history underlines the depth of the roots. In a country of more or less unbroken succession of social history, continuity of traditions, customs, conventions, and rituals, result in overlaying the contemporary framework of society with certain continuing forms of primordial ties. These bonds continue to project their cohesion even within the parameters of a democratic system, that is, post-primordial and post-colonial political system. But the point to note is that these ties and bonds still evoke strong primordial loyalties around a wide range of identities, sometimes even at the expense of loyalties around modernised focii of allegiance like class, strata, union, professional association, ideology, party, etc.

The social composition of the Indian polity today may be visualised as representing a gigantic mosaic in which primordial cleavages both intersect and inter-mix with contemporary socio-economic segments. The social situation in India, therefore, reveals the co-existence of multilevel and multistructured groups. New class formations that have come into being as a consequence of the process of industrialisation and urbanisation, compete for cohesion and loyalty with the persisting feudal-cum-tribal pattern in the rural hinterland and *jati*-cum-religious community loyalties in the urban situation.

There is a peculiar pattern of interaction and intertwining between the pre-industrial and industrial class formations, particularly because of the tenacious hold of feudal agrocraft bonds in large tracts of the country. But since the political system is democratic, based on the constitutional recognition of rights of liberty and equality of the citizens, irrespective of caste, creed, gender and domicile, and since the system functions on the principle of adult franchise, periodic elections and divisions of power, as between the Centre and the States and within the organs of government, we find the manifestation of primordial loyalties taking diverse forms.

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THE contradiction between the modernised political system and the social situation marked by a patchwork of tradition and modernity, is all too apparent in several sectors of national life. As long as the democratic social revolution remains incomplete, political democracy would continue to bear the brunt of the infighting of the dominant caste-cum-class forces for power, and for increasing acquisition of goods and services. They seek to keep the lower castes and classes outside the pale of the beneficial effect of national development and the range of national prosperity. In a situation of unequal advantage, every increase in the GNP and in national standards of living would continue to give unequal benefits to the entrenched 'haves' at the expense of the disinherited and dislocated 'have-nots', notwithstanding the slogans about democratisation, distributive justice and socialism.

With the dawn of political independence, the process of industrialisation gained momentum and acquired a certain direction. Planned development within the matrix of a mixed economy has its own points of contradictions. Public sector, in the framework of the capitalist mode of production, has not promoted the prospects of socialism (even if that was intended, as it is sometimes naively believed) but provided, at public and state cost, the infrastructure of power, energy, coal, iron and steel, transportation, communication, etc., that facilitated the growth and expansion of a sprawling capitalist system in India. At best, the public sector represents the segment of state capitalism, more as a cooperative rather than as a competitive element of the given economic system, creating a contradictory tableau of growth *and* poverty. The process of industrialisation is still far behind the requisite level of development that could stabilise the basis of a self-reliant and a self-generating economy. This is clear from juxtaposing the facts that while we are fifteenth in rank in terms of our GNP, we have the dubious distinction of being 106th in terms of *per capita* income. It is instructive to remember that during the decades of planned development, while the net national product at constant prices has increased by 165 per cent the per capita share has increased only by 45 per cent (that is, almost one-fourth less). Hence, the contradictory phenomenon of growth *and* poverty, and not growth eliminating poverty.

By unofficial reckoning about 38 to 40 per cent of our people are below the poverty-line. To comprehend this phenomenon of contradiction that has precluded the percolation of benefits to the disinherited populace, one has to examine carefully the pattern of interaction and dialectics between the 'given' market forces (controlled and manipulated by expanded business-commercial-industrial linkage among the propertied classes) and the role and expectation of the emerging classes (constituting segments of the formerly alienated and oppressed groups and middle castes) in a situation of expanding and protected capitalist system in India. In this process, while part of the poor have certainly not remained poor despite the fact that part of the rich have become richer, yet the more crucial truth remains that a bulk of the poor have continued to remain poor, if not in absolute, certainly in relative terms, because the gulf between the rich and the poor segments have grown in terms of income-distribution, civic amenities, availability of goods and services, and the potential of using the opportunities provided by growth itself.

There are two sides of this picture. The positive side is that in 45 years there has been a phenomenal rise and expansion of the middle and working class. Probably nowhere in world history, this size and diversity of professionals and occupational groups of the middle class and working class has emerged in such large proportion jointly accounting for more than 300 million people. The negative side is that in terms of the total human situation in the country, this growth of the middle and working class is off-set by the existence of millions constituting the lower classes and poor peasantry, comprising the massive impoverished segment in the continental rural hinterland and in myriad pockets of urban agglomeration.

In India one might identify five propertied and five non-propertied classes that play economic, social and political roles, as aggregate groups in the working of the Indian polity. These classes, in broad strokes, are:

Five Propertied Classes

i. Major capitalists, with all-India spread and controlling major industries; top businessmen and traders; big contractors;
ii. Middle bourgeoisie, with regional relevance;
iii. Traditional commercial classes;
iv. Rural rich;
v. Upper segment of professional groups, top managers and senior bureaucrats.

Five Non-propertied Classes

i. Middle and lower middle classes, that is, middle professional groups; small traders; middle and lower bureaucracy;
ii. Working classes;
iii. Marginal and small cultivators;
iv. Landless labourers, poor peasants;
v. Lower service sector and menial workers, unemployed and destitutes.

India's political system, with its liberal democratic overtones, leans towards a coalescence of power comprising the upper classes and middle castes (led by the captains of industry and commerce and the land-based rural rich), whose joint interest-orientation runs counter to the programme of an all-inclusive egalitarian transformation. The four subsystems of the Political System, namely, the Party System, the Electoral System, the Parliamentary System and the Administrative System, function each within itself and all together, in a manner that contributes to the maintenance of a power-equation, in which the dominance of the propertied classes and their interests is assured.

II: Characteristics of the Indian Party System

The spectrum of the party system in India is such that with the exception of the Communist Parties, all parties, when the chips are down, cater to the multiple interests of the propertied classes in varying degrees and in many forms. The electoral system is manipulated by vote-banks, and powerful caste-cum-interest factions, greased by the effective use of black money (which today has become almost a parallel economy, vitiating many assumptions of investment, taxation, resource mobilisation, etc.) in financing the ever-increasing costs of elections. Parliamentary elections have become an exercise in severely limited options. At the federal apex of power at least, even now the Congress looms large on the political horizon as the only all-India party with branches in every State and Union Territory, and in practically every district and several *tehsil* towns.

The Indian party system is asymmetrical. The centre-piece is the Congress, dominating the all-India scene by its numerical preponderance, and habitual support that it receives from the administration, the vested interests, the local toughs and *dadas*, as the more-or-less permanent ruling party in a majority of the States. Next to this gigantasaurus, there are two types of parties, the trans-regional parties covering a few States like the BJP, Janata Dal and Lok Dal on the Right, and the CPM and CPI on the Left; and the uni-regional parties like the DMK and AIADMK in Tamil Nadu; Kranti Ranga in Karnataka; Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh; National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir; Akali Dal in Punjab; Jharkhand Mukti Morcha in Bihar; Forward Bloc and RSP in Bengal, etc., and a few parties, groups, and factions of local relevance.

Since the 1989 elections the BJP has emerged as the main Opposition party in Parliament, and a ruling party in large States of the Hindi belt—UP, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh. Because of this situation naturally the effective range of choice for the elections to the Vidhan Sabhas of the States is a little wider. Hence the DMK or AIADMK Government in Tamil Nadu; the CPM in West Bengal and Tripura; occasional coalitions of Opposition parties in Kerala, Gujarat and Rajasthan. The non-Communist Left—the erstwhile PSP, SSP, Socialist Party—have dissolved in the cauldron of anti-Congressism. What remains in the Janata Dal and Lok Dal are frustrated remnants whose socialist identity pales into irrelevance in the alchemy of heterogenous coalition.

The Congress has been in power both at the federal level and in a majority of States of the Union for most of the past four-and-a-half decades, essentially because of three reasons—as a main successor to the national movement, as the only all-India party that unites our multi-ethnic, multilingual and multireligious people, and as the party that represents what may be called the 'GCM' of Indian politics by trying to unite the many ideological segments into an operational unity. Being a multiclass party, it has points of contradiction but its dominant leadership ever since the time of Jawaharlal Nehru has maintained a Centrist position that despite its alternate tilting towards the 'Left' and the 'Right' had, nevertheless, kept a balance between the many forces and ideological strands and worked out a pragmatic alternative which did transform India in the course of just four decades into a stable political community, integrating the many streams of linguistic, cultural and religious diversities and laid the foundations of a self-reliant economic base and generated the long-drawn process of cumbersome social change.

III: Aberrations in the Political System

Reflecting on the functioning of the political system four obvious aberrations stand out as severe impediments in the process of socio-economic transformation, namely, *populism, economism, parochialism,* and the *breakdown of the national consensus.*

In countries like India that have suffered for centuries, first under feudal autocracies and oppression, and then under colonial exploitation and foreign domination, the accumulated problem of social inequality, economic imbalances, blatant discrimination based on caste, creed, language and region are so many that it creates a situation propitious for populism, particularly in a polity that depends on periodic elections and competing party system for the continuance and legitimacy of its power structure. This has generated widespread *political permissiveness,* signifying palpable erosion of values to a shameless degree. Nothing is beyond a typical politician—lying, cheating, duplicity, blackmail, indecency, exhortation of money, land-grab—you name it, and it is there. Since success is the only goal, leaders and parties indulge in blatant propaganda, and in the game of toppling and defection. The populism of the ruling party is matched by the populism of the Opposition. Removal of the Congress becomes the single major point of Opposition unity.

To maintain themselves in power, the manipulative instinct of the Indian political elite often make them cultivate what may be called the dualistic style of functioning marked by public promises and private betrayals. Without promises mass-support in the shape of popular votes is not possible, and without betrayal the interests of the dominant classes cannot be served. Without the help of the dominant classes, the political elites cannot remain in power, even as without mass acquiescence they cannot pretend to retain the facade of the 'consent of the governed'. This is probably endemic in the system.

To repeat, in the situation obtaining within the parameters of the Indian political system, a party cannot come to power without the people's vote, and cannot remain in power without upper class support. The political system as functioning in India is predicated on maintaining its power and legitimacy by manipulating the mutually contradictory, but jointly reinforcing, pulls and pressures from opposite class formations. This in-built contradiction lends itself to populism on the one side and to the strengthening of economic oligarchy on the other. The politicians in a liberal democracy are like brokers who strive to sell *political democracy* to the masses and enjoy the pay-off from the *economic hegemony* of the upper classes, in a bid to retain their own power by mediating between the two within a *tolerable level of tension* and reconciliable conflict, whose management then becomes their main preoccupation.

Economism and Trade Unionism flourish in the situation of 'libertarianism' that is an off-shoot of the prevalent political atmosphere marked by overemphasis on workers' rights at the expense of concomitant obligations of the workers towards national development. The liberties taken by the propertied classes coupled with the mismanagement, inefficiency and corruption that is rampant in industrial complexes, vitiate the atmosphere for the maintenance of an equilibrium between rights and duties, privileges and obligations. In an unequal society while the 'haves' still command a disproportionate share in the national wealth, whatever be the level of production and the GNP, it is the working class and the discriminated sections that have to face the adverse effect of maldevelopment, low production, topsy-turvy scale of priorities and low rate of growth of the GNP. Therefore, at this stage of economic development in India, marked by imbalances and low production level, unequal to the national requirement, inordinate preoccupation with the rights, wages, bonus, concessions, etc. is counter-productive. Without the fulfilment of production targets and improvement of efficiency, the very prospects of generating more wealth and greater opportunities for the completion of the socio-economic transformation would remain bleak, thereby adversely effecting the working class, the poor peasantry and backward sections.

In this situation, obviously the working class segments are caughtup as it were in a vicious circle. Preoccupation with their own rights, however important, cuts them away from the sympathy of the larger citizenry, apart from attracting the might of law and the oppressive apparatus of the state. Economism has robbed the working class of its radical edge and revolutionary role.

Parochialism in India takes two main forms: Communalism and Casteism. Each of the two forms tries to fragment the national identity and fracture the national body-politic. They counterpose allegiance to a sub-national segment at the expense of the larger whole—the nation—and weakens the slow and precarious process of the growth of an equipoised federal polity. A responsible and responsive Central federal authority alone can reconcile the legitimate and well-coordinated autonomies of regions and subregions within which most of the genuine demands of the linguistic, cultural and religious communities can be met. A viable pattern of 'unity in diversity', that is, unity of political integration tempered by the diversities of language, cultural and religious communities, caste and tribes, is a prerequisite for the flowering of India's peculiar national genius. Parochialism destroys this very possibility by promoting group-rivalry, animosity, tension and violence. Quite often their idiom, slogans, methods of organisation and agitation (particularly of caste and communal parochialism) are reminiscent of fascistic politics. "Communalism," said Jawaharlal Nehru, "is the fascism of India."

All the parties, at one or the other time and in one or the other form, are guilty of fomenting parochial loyalties for the ulterior motive of winning an election or mounting an agitation, or settling a partisan score. But what is alarming is the fact that in the spectrum of the Indian party system, there are parties, groups and fora which thrive on the exclusive basis of promoting communalism and casteism. And this in the name of democracy, and even quite often invoking perversely the concept of genuine secularism. The BJP support by the RSS, the Shiv Sena, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, etc., and the Dal Khalsa work in the full glare of the people, the media and the Government of India. There are other parties, some even with socialist pretensions, whose main support-base is around certain middle-*jatis*, and which inevitably cater to the protection and promotion of the interests of these *jatis* variously under the cover of rural development, egalitarianism, greater benefit for the agricultural classes, inter-regional and inter-sectoral balance, etc.

It is in this context that there is a constant tussle between the two alternative processes of 'secularism' and secularisation of the polity on the one hand, and 'communalism' and communal polarisation between religious communities on the other.

(To be continued)

RAVI BAKAYA: Roerichs' Story

(Continued from page 24)

heritage—they remind us not only of our past but about something that is permanent and eternal. And we feel that we are indebted to Nikolai Roerich who expressed this spirit in his magnificent canvases. (Retranslated from Russian)

In June last year an international trust was formed to preserve the works of the Roerichs. The trust has 15 members, notable among them being the Presidents of India and Russia. This is what Rostislav Rybakov, Deputy Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow and a member of the International Roerich Memorial Trust, said about Svyatoslav Roerich:

> To belong to two homes is not easy, but he was at ease in both homes. And sometimes he would say 'our country' and we didn't know if he meant India or Russia...Svyatoslav Roerich and Mahatma Gandhi seem strangely connected. I remember the first meeting of the Roerich Centre in Moscow. It lasted five long hours and Raisa Gorbacheva sat through it all. It was held on October 2, the Mahatma's birth anniversary. And Svyatoslav Roerich died the same day as the Mahatma...With his passing away it seems as if the twentieth century has come to an end, because he was a man who represented the old culture of prerevolutionary Russia for us and there remains no direct line to that era now. He was also a man of the future, like Mahatma Gandhi and Swami Vivekananda, who lived amongst us, spoke our language but were often regarded as cranks by a world that had not learnt to hear or understand them. Svyatoslav Roerich influenced us not just with his presence, but the presence of our past and probably—with Russia and India in himself—both our futures. (*The Times of India*, February 7, 1993)

Remembering Iqbal

RATAN KUMAR SAHOO

Perhaps nothing would be more appropriate, if we want his soul to rest in peace, than to understand him correctly. In India as well as Pakistan, he is read by many, understood correctly by a few, interpreted by many but correctly reinterpreted by very few. He is remembered as the composer of *"Sare Jahan Se Achha, Hindustan Hamara..."* but he is equally blamed for the partition of the country and as the working brain behind the creation of Pakistan. He is read by the Indian scholars as the man who in the beginning of the Indian nationalist movement supported it whole-heartedly but towards the end of his life exhibited a reactionary tendency, opposed democracy as a system of government, and simultaneously drove the Muslim masses away from the mainstream.

Now on April 21, when we are once again going to celebrate "Iqbal Day", one needs to strive for the correct reinterpretation of his personality. Only by doing so can we not only get a better idea of this towering figure but also save our future generations from adopting a biased opinion of him based on subjective prejudices.

Sir Muhammed Iqbal, the poet of world fame and the great Islamic philosopher who interpreted Islam as the most modern and revolutionary religion, played an important role in the history of the Indian Muslims. He supported the liberal movement and asked the Muslim liberals to be on guard so that the broad human principle which Islam stood for was not thrown into the background by emphasis on the nation and the race. He was essentially a humanist and considered Islam as a religion of broadest humanism.

It is very often commented that Iqbal, in the later phase of his life, exhibited a reactionary tendency; he opposed democracy as a system and became hostile to the Indian nationalist movement. This seems to be an inadequate and misinterpretation of his basic ideas. If one tries to thoroughly analyse his thoughts as expressed in his book, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam,* one is in a position to say without hesitation that the various allegations made against him are false. Iqbal's world view is based on his deep concern for the future of humanity as well as religion.

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> He believes that religion is an instrument that acts for the moral upliftment of men. If there had been no man there would have been no religion. Therefore humanity and religion complement each other. After a deep insight into his writings it is interesting to note that the views which are being expressed by the liberal thinkers of today about the future of humanity, are more or less the same which had been expressed by Iqbal in his writings more than fifty years ago.[1]

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FROM an introductory comment by Ather Farouqui in an exclusive interview with Dr Javaid Iqbal, former Chief Justice of Pakistan and the son of Sir Mohammed Iqbal, it becomes clear that Dr Mohammed Iqbal was the pioneer of the new interpretation of Islamic philosophy. He didn't agree with the centuries-old interpretations of Islam and commented that "Islam will have to lose its relevance if the interpretation of the mundane affairs is not made in accordance with the philosophy of Islam based on the needs of the time".

> It was around a century ago Iqbal had thought and revealed the importance of family planning and birth control which he believed formed a part of Islamic teachings. He was of the opinion that Islamic Fiqha must be rewritten according to the needs of the time. His book, *Reconstruction of the Religious Thought in Islam,* is written on this basis. But even today the Mullahs in India and Pakistan do not agree to this interpretation of the Islamic philosophy of Sir Iqbal. In his opinion, the Indian Mullahs have left no room for the young generation who wish to become modern while remaining Muslim.[2]

His Allahabad address (1930) which contained his suggestion for the formation of a Muslim state in the north-west of the Indian subcontinent is very often misunderstood by many. Its misinterpretation leads us to make false charges against him. The present-day Pakistan is not in accordance with the concept of a separate Muslim state as conceived by Iqbal. Iqbal alluded to the

United Muslim world, when he stated:

> *Ek Hon Muslim Haram Ki Pasbani Ke Liye.*
> *Neel Ke Shail Se Lekar Ta Ba Khak-E-Kashghar*
>
> (The Muslims, from the bank of Nile to the soil of Kashghar, must unite to defend the Haram, the place around the Kaaba and a symbol of Unity of the Muslims.)

Iqbal had the vision of such a state which could be called Islamistan. As the present Pakistan is not the full representation of what Iqbal had in mind, so he has aptly commented:

> Nations are born in the hearts of the poets But they prosper and die in the hands of the politicians.[3]

In his poem titled "Mecca and Geneva", included in his poetic collection *'Zerb-e-kalim'*, he points out that in this age nations seem to be mixing freely with one another, although the principle of human unity remains hidden from the discerning eye. This is so because the aim of Western diplomacy is to divide the humanity into nations whereas the mission of Islam is to unite human beings into one fraternity. He was critical of the League of Nations from this point of view which was expressed in his letter to the city of Geneva wherein he asked:

> Are you content to be a seat of the League of Nations or would you prefer to be the centre of United Humanity?[4]

This was the basic idea in his mind when he urged the Muslim liberals to be on guard. In his view, nation and races had divided humanity into various parts. Such was his unsuppressed instinct for humanity.

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TWO months before his death on April 21, 1938 he pointed out:

> The modern age prizes itself on its progress in knowledge and its matchless scientific developments. No doubt the prize is justified .... But in spite of all these developments tyranny of imperialism.... struts abroad, covering its face in the masks of capitalist democracy, territorial nationalism, communism, fascism and heaven knows what else besides.[5]

Under these masks, the spirit of freedom and the dignity of man are being trampled underfoot in a way in which not even the darkest period of human history presents a parallel. So Iqbal was a critic of this sort of democracy which tried to establish barriers between human beings on the basis of territorial nationality. For him this sort of democracy is inadequate for the great concern of humanity. That is why he was against democracy as understood and interpreted by the West. He was against that sort of leadership, which proved to be demons of bloodshed, tyranny and oppression, kept subjugating the weaker peoples and sowed the seeds of division among the human beings and who had no voice for human sympathy. He was of the opinion:

> this world will remain a battleground of ferocious beasts of prey unless and until the educational and moral forces of the whole world are directed to inculcate in man respect for mankind.... The nation's unity too is not a very durable force. Only one unity is dependable and that unity is the brotherhood of man, which is above race, nationality, colour on language.. so long as men do not demonstrate by their actions that they believe that the whole world is the family of god, so long as the distinction of race, colour and geographical nationalities are not wiped out completely they will never be able to lead happy and contented life and the beautiful ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity will never materialise.[6]

Iqbal is of the view that Modern Man claims to be secular in the sense that he is indifferent towards religion. The reason is that, according to his evaluation, religion is in conflict with science and since the findings of science are rationally demonstrable, religion is reduced to mere superstitions providing solace to man in his state of ignorance; but of no authentic relevance in the present and the future opinion. Iqbal does not agree with this conclusion. In his opinion, reality has outer as well as inner dimensions. Science is concerned with the external behaviour of reality whereas the domain of religion is to discover the meanings of reality in reference to its inner nature. In this respect both scientific and religious process run parallel to each other. While commenting on these processes Iqbal states:

> A careful study of the nature and purpose of these really complementary processes shows that both of them are directed to the purification of experience in their respective spheres.[7]

He divides religious life into three phases. In the first phase it appears as a form of discipline which is voluntarily accepted by the people as unconditional commands without rational understanding of the ultimate purpose of those commands. It is only in this sense that religion is based on dogma, ritual or some kind of priesthood. In the second phase revelation is reconciled with reason and discipline is followed by a rational understanding of its authority. It is in this phase that religion engenders hatred of one religion against the other as well as within the religion itself when one mode of interpretation comes into conflict with another. In the third phase religious life develops the ambition to come into direct contact with the ultimate reality and it is at this stage that religion becomes a matter of personal assimilation of life and power.

For Iqbal, this stage of religious life is what he calls higher religion. He says:

> This religion is a search for a larger life, is essentially experience and recognised the necessity of experience as its foundation long before science learnt to do so.[8]

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IQBAL does not agree with the two-way Western approach to secularism. The first is the indifference toward religion which is followed by the capitalist democracies; the other type is based on the suppression of religion as was done by the socialist countries. Both the approaches of secularism have not been able to resolve the problem.

It is perhaps in this background that Iqbal rejected the methodologies of territorial nationalism, capitalism, atheistic socialism as well as religious conservatism as drawing upon the psychological forces of late, suspicion and resentment which tend to impoverish the soul of man closing up his hidden sources of spiritual energy. So he says any religion which in its higher manifestation is neither dogma, nor prisesthood, nor ritual can alone ethically prepare the modern man for the burden of the great responsibility which the advancement of modern science necessarily involves and restore him that attitude of faith which makes him capable of winning a personality here and retaining it hereafter.

Now it becomes clear before us that the solution of the problem lies in the adoption of a policy neither of indifference nor of suppression of religion but of respecting all religions. Every religion must be seen in its higher phase. So, says Iqbal, each great religion, at the higher level contains the absolute truth. Therefore, it is necessary for us to understand, to discover and to project the higher level of its religion. It is at this level that religion can restore to humanity its spiritual unity and ethnically prepare man to respect his fellow man.

In this sense Iqbal does not consider Islam as a religion in the ancient sense of the word. For him,

> It is an attitude—an attitude, that is to say, of freedom and even of defiance to the universe. It is really a protest against the entire outlook of the ancient world. Briefly it is the discovery of man.[9]

Iqbal also tries to deduce the principle of higher religion from the verses of the Quran and bases his political idealism on them. In his Allahabad address he pointed out:

> A community which is inspired by feelings of ill-will towards other communities, is low and ignoble. He had highest respect for the customs, laws, religious and social institutions of other communities. He considered it to be his duty, according to the teachings of the Quran, even to defend their places of worship if need be.[10]

For Iqbal, *Tauhid* (Unity of God) stands for equality, solidarity and freedom of man. According to him, the republican form of government is consistent with the spirit of Islam. He is convinced that the ultimate goal of Islam is the establishment of a "spiritual democracy".

He says humanity today needs three things—a spiritual interpretation of the universe, spiritual emancipation of the individual and basic principles of universal import directing the evaluation of human society on a spiritual basis. So he calls upon the Muslim to appreciate his own position, reconstruct his social life in the light of the ultimate principles and evolve, out of the hitherto partially revealed purpose of Islam, that spiritual democracy which is the ultimate aim of Islam. Hence it is necessary for man to respect his fellow man, to respect religions other than his own. It is only through the adoption of this moral and spiritual approach that man may rise to a fresh vision of his future. ■

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BOOK REVIEW

Who Controls Freedom of the Press?

HARISH CHANDOLA

Trade union leader, T.M. Nagarajan, whose name struck terror in the hearts of newspaper owners after he led the historic 50-day strike in *Indian Express* in October-November 1987, and an earlier one in *The Statesman* for three months, from May 7 to August 10, 1974 (which cost him his job as a sub-editor on that paper), has come out with a hilarious play, *Yes Sethji,* revealing the whimsical behaviour and absolute power of the proprietors and the abject surrender to them of most editors and other bigwigs whose names adorn the newspaper pages daily.

He has done very little to disguise the names of the national dailies, their owners, political leaders, editors and the so-called senior journalists in his nine act play, described as the "Satanic Species in Fourth Estate" in the sub-title.

For instance, the very first scene opens in the guest house of the owner of the *Indian Distress,* Ravan Nath Stinka, with the editor, Varun Toady, and the editor of its sister daily, *Jankatra,* Bhupesh Doshy, standing at attention in front of the Sethji, the owner, who is railing against the CBI which has raided his residence and offices.

Yes Sethji, by T.M. Nagarajan; Manak Publications, Delhi; pp. 99; Price: Rs 40.

The second scene is also set in the room of the same proprietor, well known for his political connections, holding court with three leaders, Chamchanandan, Khilona and Dongh (could they be Hemwatinandan, Khurana and V.P. Singh, who had helped in breaking the strike in that newspaper?)

Act Two brings into view the Board room of the *Crimes of India,* where a worried (owner) Seth Jamir Sain, along with "his America-returned son, Sumit" and "doe-eyed daughter, Savita" are devising ways with editor, Hiralal Pain, to teach a lesson to Seth Stinka and his editor, Toady, for printing a story in the *Indian Distress* about Sain's foreign currency account in London. One way suggested is to unleash the CBI men on Stinka, by providing them the "dope" on him.

The parody of well-known names goes on.

The third Act begins in the Board room of *The Salesman* daily on Bahurangee Square of Kalighat. The time is the change of its ownership, from British into Indian hands. Meeting in that room are its new trustees, directors, the outgoing British editor, Diwan Bharlaton, Mushroom Biriyani, who becomes its Managing Director (and subsequently appropriates its editorship), and "Indian monopolists like Katas, Papadlal and others".

The departing Britisher is introducing the first Indian editor of the paper, Brown Chokra, and Dr Chalakiwala, who has become the Chariman of the Board of Directors, his nephew, Mushroom Biriyani, an insurance agent, as its new Managing Director.

Later, Brown Chokra is taking to task the news editor for missing an important story, which the rival, *Jehar Streeet Patrika,* has carried, not knowing that the Managing Director has instructed the news editor not to use it, because it criticises the Chief Minister, whom Biriyani calls the benefactor of the paper.

There were well-known editors, Emporia, Kneedeep Lier and Banihal Singh, whom Biriyani sacks one after another, after first getting rid of Brown Chokra.

Then there is the general manager, Bhrashtacharji, eulogising the godfather before the Delhi resident editor, Guftagoo, for his handling of editors, his success in securing an international award for upholding the freedom of the press and turning the Fourth Estate into real estate by bringing in Bansals for building a multistoried complex at the place where the Delhi offices of *The Salesman* stand.

In *Zootisthan Times,* Seth Billa is telling the Executive Director, Mrigesh Bhojan, to make it hot for editor Dushyant Singh, so that he leaves, and regrets his choice of the previous editor, Nargese, to his daughter, Sarathi, while giving her the control of the newspaper.

The comedy ends with names. The rest is tragedy: about the nexus between the newspaper owners and powerful politicians occupying ministerial chairs, the owners hiring editors and assigning them tasks to protect their other interests, the servility of editors and their eagerness to obey the owners' orders on what should and should not go in the papers, the suppression of news, the influencing and bribing of senior journalists, and drinking and boasting becoming the main feature of their lives.

Nagarajan has written no more than is known. Newspapers and quite a bit of journalism now play a role in the process of the moral decay we are experiencing. *Yes Sethji* only portrays particular incidents in the running of newspapers that contribute to this decline. But in doing so, it shatters the image of the big names on daily display, by highlighting the hidden hand that makes the puppets dance.

One may find several things in the play crude. But nothing shocks so much as its totality. ■

Lenin: Three Evaluations

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's 123rd birthday falls on April 22, 1993. To mark the occasion and as a tribute to that unique personality we carry below the following assessments of Lenin by Jawaharlal Nehru, M.N. Roy and Mikhail Gorbachev that are of considerable relevance in the present context. —*Editor*

It is difficult for most of us to think of our ideals and our theories in terms of reality. We have talked and written of *swaraj* for years, but when *swaraj* comes it will probably take us by surprise. We have passed the independence resolution at the Congress, and yet how many of us realise its full implications? How many belie it by their words and actions? For them it is something to be considered as a distant goal, not as a thing of today or tomorrow. They talk of *swaraj* and independence in their conferences and their councils but their minds are full of reservations and their acts are feeble and halting.

In Russia also the revolutionaries of an older generation lived in a world of theory, and hardly believed in the realisation of their ideals. But Lenin came with his directness and realism and shook the fabric of old-time orthodox socialism and revolution. He taught people to think that the ideal they had dreamed of and worked for was not mere theory but something to be realised then and there. By an amazing power of will he hypnotised a nation and filled a disunited and demoralised people with energy and determination and the strength to endure and suffer for a cause.

Many had their full share in this remarkable triumph, among them specially Trotsky... But Lenin stood supreme. Saint or sinner, the miracle was chiefly of his doing.

—Jawaharlal Nehru

[*The Hindu* (April 5, 1928)]

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GENERALLY, Trotsky's role in the Revolution is regarded only as second to that of Lenin. There are some who would not concede the first place even to Lenin. Having known both the men rather intimately for a long enough time, I came to the conclusion that there was no comparison. They lived on entirely different planes. Therefore no clash was possible. The one was a thoroughgoing subjectivist, looking upon the world as a stage set for himself to enact a great drama. The other was primarily a philosopher having a detached, objective view of the world and considering himself a part of it. Egoism and unshaken courage of conviction were respectively their outstanding characteristics. There can be no comparison, unless these two characteristics are confounded as the different expressions of the immeasurable mystic factor called personality.

The soul of Lenin's personality, if I may use one of those delightfully vague terms, expressed itself in his creation of the Bolshevik Party. Trotsky was neither a co-creator nor a part of the creation. That fact alone is the evidence of the fundamental difference in the temperament and the outlook of the two men. One was anxious to play the towering individual with a mission. The other was the simple man of the mass—the *Massenmensch,* as the Germans call it. Lenin believed in his power to build, to create something great. But he knew that he must create out of material which was not within himself. In other words, the unfolding of his creative genius was dependent upon numerous other factors, which were independent of himself. That was Lenin's greatness. In that sense, Trotsky can hardly be called a great man. It is not a mere accident that Trotsky did perform great deeds, and actually rose up to the stature of a great man only during the short period that he came under the influence of Lenin and allowed his subjectivism to be guided by the sober wisdom of the objective philosopher.

—M.N. Roy

(Written shortly after Leon Trotsky's death in 1940)

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THE works of Lenin and his ideals of socialism remained for us an inexhaustible source of dialectical creative thought, theoretical wealth and political sagacity. His very image is an undying example of lofty moral strength, all-round spiritual culture and selfless devotion to the cause of the people and to socialism. Lenin lives on in the minds and hearts of millions of people. Breaking down all the barriers erected by scholastics and dogmatists, an interest in Lenin's legacy and a thirst to know him more extensively in the original grew as negative phenomena in society accumulated....

Today we have a better understanding of

Lenin's last works, which were in essence his political bequest, and we more clearly understand why these works appeared. Gravely ill, Lenin was deeply concerned for the future of socialism. He perceived the lurking dangers for the new system. We, too, must understand this concern. He saw that socialism was encountering enormous problems and that it had to contend with a great deal of what the bourgeois revolution had failed to accomplish. Hence the utilisation of methods which did not seem to be intrinsic to socialism itself or, at least, diverged in some respects from generally accepted classical notions of socialist development....

In the West, Lenin is often portrayed as an advocate of authoritarian methods of administration. This is a sign of total ignorance of Lenin's ideas and, not infrequently, of their deliberate distortion. In effect, according to Lenin, socialism and democracy are indivisible. By gaining democratic freedoms the working masses come to power. It is also only in conditions of expanding democracy that they can consolidate and realise that power. There is another remarkably true idea of Lenin's: the broader the scope of the work and the deeper the reform, the greater the need to increase the interest in it and convince millions and millions of people of its necessity. This means that if we have set out for a radical and all-round restructuring, we must also unfold the entire potential of democracy.

—Mikhail Gorbachev
(*Perestroika*, 1987, pp. 25-26, 32)

DOCUMENT

Indo-Pak Accord on Preserving Religious Shrines

The following agreement is of invaluable significance in the current scenario marked by deteriorating relations between India and Pakistan. We are grateful to our close friend and well-wisher, A.G. Noorani, for having sent it to us for the benefit of Mainstream *readers.* —*Editor*

INDO-PAKISTAN AGREEMENT ON MAINTENANCE OF PLACES OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP, AUGUST 4, 1953

This agreement enjoins on both countries to protect, preserve and maintain places of religious worship in their respective areas and provide facilities for visiting them.

Minutes of the meeting held at Karachi in the room of Mr. G. Ahmed, Secretary, Ministry of the Interior, Government of Pakistan, on the 1st and 4th August, 1953, to discuss the question of protection, preservation and maintenance of places of religious worship in India and Pakistan.

PRESENT
India
1. Mr. Mehr Chand Khanna, Adviser, Ministry of Rehabilitation.
2. Mr. K.P. Mathrani, I.C.S., Joint Secretary, Ministry of Rehabilitation.
3. Mr. P.G. Zachariah, Deputy Secretary.

Pakistan
1. Mr. Ahmed E.H. Jaffer, Adviser, Ministry of Refugees and Rehabilitation.
2. Mr. G. Ahmed, P.S.P., Secretary, Ministry of the Interior.

The question of places of religious worship was discussed. It was felt that:

(i) Every effort should be made to ensure that places of religious worship in both countries are properly protected and maintained and their sanctity preserved particularly in the case of buildings of historical importance; buildings which have been damaged should be repaired;

(ii) increased facilities for visits to places of worship in both countries should be granted to pilgrims on their auspicious days; the Sewadars and Khadims at such places of worship should be granted facilities for residence and adequate protection; and

(iii) the question of properties attached to these shrines should be dealt with separately from the general question of Trust properties. It was suggested by Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior that the matter should be discussed further with the Ministry of Refugees & Rehabilitation, Government of Pakistan, who are concerned with it.

2. The proposal regarding the appointment of a joint commission of the representatives of the two Governments for enquiring into matters referred to in paragraph 1 above and for making factual survey about the condition of the important shrines and holy places after visiting them and making recommendations in the light of such enquiries and survey, was considered and it was felt that its further consideration should be deferred to a later stage.

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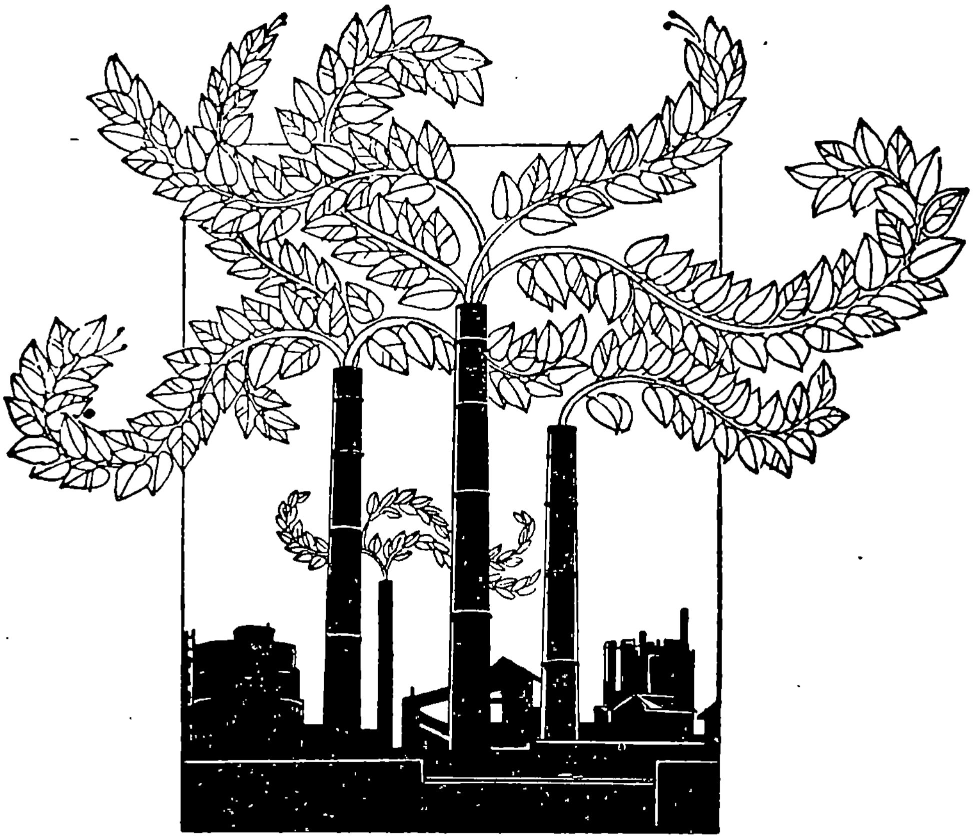
The plant that has grown into many, many trees.



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TATA STEEL

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Kashmir • Liberalisation of White Goods • Bhopal

Mainstream

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EDITORIAL

Eye-Opener

The Bombay High Court deserves to be commended for having powerfully upheld the principle of freedom of expression in its judgment on the controversy over an article on Shivaji and Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi published in the *Illustrated Weekly of India* (April 10-16, 1993).

Both the BJP-Shiv Sena legislators and those of the Congress in the Maharashtra Assembly alleged that the article had made derogatory references to Shivaji and Rani Laxmibai (which was palpably untrue). The furore on the subject [wherein even the preposterous demand of applying the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA) against the author and the publication's management was raised] resulted in the Chief Minister announcing, in a clear attempt at political oneupmanship, legal action against the journal's editor, printer and publisher.

In his verdict Justice Michael F. Saldanha categorically stated: "I find it to be well-written, balanced and presenting a point of view which does have intellectual appeal." He said there was nothing in the article to qualify for action under Section 153-A of the IPC that covers acts promoting enmity on grounds of religion, race, language, etc. and those prejudicial to maintaining harmony. Thereafter he underscored:

> ....I was forced to point out to the learned Public Prosecutor that it was quite obvious to me that nobody had taken the trouble to read, analyse and understand the article in a calm and dispassionate manner before directing a prosecution.... It also transpired in the course of the arguments that of all the persons who had, in fact, been responsible for openly advocating communal and religious disharmony in the recent past, no action under Section 153-A of the Indian Penal Code had been instituted against any of them; whereas the government desired to prosecute only the present petitioners in right earnest.... I asked the learned State Counsel as to what action and in how many cases the government has acted against persons who have, in fact, committed serious offences under Section 153-A of the Indian Penal Code. The question evoked no answer and there was an embarrasing silence in the Court Room. That aspect of the matter is, however, significant—it speaks volumes.

At the outset the Judge had averred:

> Distressing, misguided and misdirected is the only apt description for the action contemplated against the petitioners...

Asserting that the "present prosecution is much ado about nothing", Justice Saldanha defended freedom of expression in no uncertain terms:

> ...the authorities concerned with this class of action should carefully evaluate the material before embarking on action, more so when it is directed against writers and journalists. This is very necessary if Constitutional guarantees are to be safeguarded and concepts that held good in the dark ages are not to be allowed to turn the clock backwards.

There is no gainsaying that immense pressure was brought to bear on the publication from the powers-that-be, compelling the editor to offer an apology and the management to withdraw the issue of the *Weekly* from circulation.

Now judicial intervention has endorsed publication of such an article. This verdict demands that the press engage in self-introspection and stand firm on principles, especially when the offensives from the side of the *Hindutva* protagonists are expected to assume more serious proportions, and the stalwarts of the Congress-I would continue to display rank opportunism and surrender to such onslaughts casting a Nelson's eye to blatantly communal outbursts (as in the Shiv Sena mouthpiece, *Samna*) while publicly pledging to "fight the Shiv Sena politically" instead of banning it.

The Bombay High Court judgment should be an eye-opener for all.

April 28 *S.C.*

Kashmir and Conscience

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

In the brochures and posters of Indian tourism, Kashmir still figures with its enchanting attractions. In reality, however, the picturesque Valley of Kashmir is becoming out of bounds for the peace-loving citizens of this country.

In a sense, Kashmir today represents the gravest challenge to Indian democracy—perhaps much more than what happened at Ayodhya on December 6 and all that followed. If the bomb blast in Bombay on March 12 and the blow-up of the bomb storage in Calcutta that came in its wake, announced the arrival of the mafia to disrupt our democracy, don't the bloody clashes in the Kashmir Valley presage the departure of its most significant part from our Republic?

The crisis in Kashmir has been worsening year after year. Without going into the protracted history of neglect, high-handedness, corruption and systematic subversion of the democratic order which the Centre has perpetrated in that State for forty years now, one may take the unseating of a duly elected government in 1984—planned and carried out with cold-blooded precision by people some of whom today claim to be specialists in the subject—as the last milepost along the dismal trail of progressive alienation of the people of the Valley from the rest of this country.

This 1984 coup by which Farooq Abdullah's duly elected government was overthrown by the minions from the Delhi Durbar blatantly arranging defection of MLAs with a Governor specially sent out for the operation, shattered the confidence of the common people in the Valley in the Centre's commitment to democratic functioning in Kashmir. And it was during the rickety administration of the Centrally-propped up regime of Ghulam Shah that the first outbreak of communal violence took place in the Valley.

While this monstrosity of a Ministry could not hold out for long and the Governor's Raj resumed in this sensitive frontier State, a patch-up between Farooq's National Conference and the Congress brought into office a coalition Ministry which could neither forge a unified front nor win the confidence of the people. Inevitably the militant groups gained in influence and the first serious threat of secession could be discerned. The illumination on the Pakistan Day (August 14) and black-out on Indian Independence Day (August 15) in 1989 should have opened the eyes of the political leaders, but the Kashmir crisis was hardly examined in detail by either the Congress or the Janata Dal Governments. By the time of the Republic Day January 26, 1990, the crisis had reached the boiling point, and the only thing that could be achieved was the hoisting of the tricolour. Meanwhile, no elected government could be restored as the State Assembly itself had been dissolved, and since then the Governor's Rule has continued uninterrupted requiring enabling constitutional amendments being periodically passed by Parliament. In other words, it has turned out to be an open confrontation between New Delhi and the people in the Valley, with the militants assuming their leadership.

The last three years has been one of unrelieved unwisdom in the Centre's dealing with Kashmir. Even when the Pandit families began to leave their native place in the Valley, there was no waking-up on the part of the Centre—neither at the government level, nor at the political party level. The accretion of strength of the militants was ascribed to the Pakistan Government's generous backing of them, and at one stage, the Central leaders accused Pakistan of waging a proxy war against India in Kashmir. But what steps were taken by the government and the political parties to retrieve the fast dwindling faith of the people of the Valley in the Indian leadership?

The only tangible evidence of New Delhi's concern and interest in Kashmir was the despatch of forces, more and more in greater numbers. The para-military forces as they are called, are for all practical purposes engaged in waging a virtual war in the Valley. For sometime, the public in this country was made to believe by the government that all the strident outcry by the human-rights activists was inspired by interested circles in the West which back Pakistan and run down India. But when many of the atrocities began to be exposed in the Indian media by a whole body of intrepid Indian journalists, that official alibi could hardly hold water. Isolated cases of exaggerated reporting were highlighted by official circles to desperately cover up the shocking state of affairs in the Valley.

◆

TODAY, the government seems to be living in a pathetic world of unreality insofar as Kashmir is concerned. At the beginning of this year, it was given out that the government would be coming out with a new set of proposals for Kashmir. In fact, the Prime Minister had earlier hinted on a "package" for Kashmir. It was given out that Farooq Abdullah was being brought back as this might help to win over at least a sizeable section of the public which alone could be turned into a foothold for resuming the political process.

Farooq Abdullah himself stated on March 15 that there was "definite rethinking in Delhi for a solution to the Kashmir problem". It was largely at his suggestion that the Governor was changed and General Krishna Rao was brought back to hold the post from which he had stepped down in 1990. Farooq might have been useful in establishing contact with the militants, as he is known to have had personal rapport with some of the JKLF leaders abroad. But New Delhi did not wake up and Farooq Abdullah got fed up and just within a month of his optimistic statement, he withdrew from the scene bitterly attacking the Central Government for being "unable to understand the gravity of the situation"; and "even if they do, they are clearly incapable of taking any firm decision". It is worth noting that this statement by Farooq Abdullah came three days after the Union Home Minister's assurance to the press in Chandigarh on April 15 that the government was in the process of framing "a definite policy" on Kashmir.

Farooq Abdullah might have slunk away to hibernate abroad, but what is the record of the government since then? The security force bosses in Srinagar has been claiming that their relentless operation had crippled the militant outfit and soon there would be a turn for the better in the situation. The crackdowns are being conducted with a degree of ruthlessness never resorted to before by the Indian forces, not even in Nagaland. Young and old, men and women nobody are spared as Indian reporters have reported in recent weeks in our media. The criminal record of the para-military forces in Sopore in January would have inflamed the wrath of any people anywhere in the world. And in the very week of the Home Minister's statement promising a "definite policy" in Kashmir, in that very week the security forces indulged in another round of beastly incendiarism destroying a good part of the historic Lal Chowk in Srinagar.

This had its inevitable repercussion within the administration itself. The State police force revolted when one policeman was killed in custodial death by the Centre's paramilitary forces on April 22. The police took out a protest march to make a representation to the UN office in Srinagar, and the next day the revolt of the policemen was joined by their Kashmiri officers. Could there be a more glaring proof of complete alienation of the people from the Central authority—alienation assuming the character of active antagonism?

We, all of us, have to hang down our heads in shame for all the follies and crimes that are taking place in Kashmir today. Not only the government but, it is amazing, the leaders of different parties in Parliament have not cared to demand even a full-scale discussion on the grave situation in Kashmir. What do we gain by pleading with the USA to declare Pakistan a terrorist state when we ourselves have forfeited the trust of the people of the Kashmir Valley who on the very morrow of independence had fought with bare arms to push back the armed marauders from Pakistan?

India's democracy can never sustain itself by stamping the jackboot on the people in any part of this far-flung republic of ours. Kashmir summons us to heed the voice of our conscience. ■

Kashmir

The pall of suffocating fog has lifted,
the interminable frost has ceased at last,
the sun has startled the earthly paradise
into a sudden awakening.
With both her hands
Kashmir sets aside the snow-curtains,
and out of her casements
scatters handfuls of yellow leaves
as she welcomes the sun
and the strong winds of early summer
which drive away mist and snow.

As the sun rises high in the sky
her sweet face hardens.
The snow starts melting,
the runnels become vibrant with life,
there is touch of the verdant plains
on her face,
and the wind of the southern seas
plays with her hair.
The pines and deodars of her forest
nod their heads in acquiescence
of an impending storm.

Kashmir is no more
an inert mass of congealed snow.
Sun-awakened, she is become a land
of thousands of restless rills and runnels
quickened by an ardent summer.

That is why the pennants of a norwester
flutter high in the riotous skies of Kashmir,
and there is mighty heaving
in the massive heart of the Himalayas,
portending an awakening
after millions of years of slumber.

Sukanta Bhattacharya
(1926-1947)
(translated from the original Bengali by Kshitis Roy)

No Limit to Judicial Aggrandisement

MADHU LIMAYE

President's Rule was imposed in UP in the evening of December 6, 1992. The States of MP, HP and Rajasthan came under Central Rule on December 15 and resolutions approving President's Rule were moved on December 22. In the short debate that followed no senior leader of the BJP came forward to oppose them. It was left to Gumanmal Lodha to speak against the resolutions. Lodha cited Dr Ambedkar's statement in the Constituent Assembly expressing the hope that no occasion would arise to put Article 356 "into operation" and that it would be "a dead letter".

The majority judgment of the Madhya Pradesh High Court has also cited the speeches of Ambedkar, H.N. Kunzru and others. The exercise is wholly futile. A reasonable person in considering these speeches must ask himself: What was the context? Did the aforesaid speakers expect that the State Governments would calculatedly defy the Rule of Law, that they would carry out demolition of religious shrines in violation of the solemn public assurances by the top leaders of the ruling party and the affidavits made in the Courts that the religious structure would be protected, much less anticipate it? The answer can only be in the negative. Then what is the great point in remembering what Ambedkar and Kunzru said fortyfive years ago? Both were great constitutionalists and would have been shocked by the behaviour of the *RSS Parivar*.

Lodha then went on to cite the statement made by the Left parties before the Sarkaria Commission about the amendment of Article 356 and Article 357 "to prevent their misuse". Lodha claimed that he had opposed the dismissal of the nine State Governments in 1977. (*Lok Sabha Debates*, December 22, 1922, columns 11006-10)

◆

I do not remember what he had said then. But the JS-BJP on whose behalf he was speaking never opposed the abuse of Article 356 in 1977, nor its even more blatant abuse in Karnataka in the first week of January 1978.

P.K. Bansal (Congress-I) quoted from the letter of Rajasthan Governor, Channa Reddy, to Prime Minister Narasimha Rao:

> This ban is not being implemented at all. One of the Ministers had resigned and he, alongwith 22 MLAs—apart from about 15,000 BJP workers—had participated in the Kar Seva at Ayodhya on December 6, 1992. They were given a royal send off—and similarly a royal welcome when they returned—by influential people in the political set up running the government.

His point was that the BJP Governments in the other three States were a party to the act of vandalism in Ayodhya. (*Ibid.*, P.K. Bansal, column 11037)

Rupchand Pal (CPI-M) said that today there is "an extraordinary situation".

> What happened when President's Rule was imposed in Punjab? L.K. Advani welcomed President's Rule there because the nation was facing the worst kind of terrorism. Are we not facing religious terrorism of the worst type? So, we have no hesitation, we have no reservation in supporting President's Rule in the BJP-ruled States and we have risen to the occasion. We will, however, continue to oppose the misuse of this Article for narrow partisan ends....

The CPI-M spokesman obviously meant to convey that the proclamations before the House were not inspired by narrow ends. (*Ibid.*, column 11049)

Harikishore Singh (JD) said that he always opposed misuse of Article 356. But the question today is whether the Court Orders will be obeyed or not. *It was not a case of one State Government violating these orders. It was one political party which was violating these orders. This violation was done in the presence of the Leader of the Opposition.* In Ayodhya not only the disputed structure but the pillars of secularism, of the constitutional foundation of the country were sought to be demolished. We are opposed to the misuse of Article 356, but we do not want the constitutional structure to be destroyed. The situation today is extraordinary. The challenge is to our entire past, our culture and to the legacy of the freedom movement. The incompetent Centre has failed to meet the challenge. The supremacy of the Constitution has to be defended by every citizen. (*Ibid.*, columns 11054-55)

Indrajit Gupta (CPI), the experienced parliamentarian, said that their support to the promulgation of President's Rule in these four States should not be taken to mean that they had "basically" changed their attitude to Article 356. They had opposed all cases of arbitrary use of these powers for party purposes. *But are the cases of abuse of this power where the majority*

(*Continued on page 34*)

White Goods Liberalisation and Squeeze on Public Sector

ARUN GHOSH

The foreign exchange assets of the country, as of March 19, 1993, were US $ 9.26 billion, as compared to $ 8.63 billion on March 20, 1992. (*RBI Weekly Statistical Supplement*, March 27, 1993) Even though the trade deficit in 1992-93 is expected to be close to $ 5 billion, and the overall deficit on the current account of the balance of payments (during 1992-93) is expected to be of the order of $ 7 billion—these estimates are the latest "official" ones available, and have been taken from the *Economic Survey*—we have added more than half a billion dollars to our foreign exchange reserves. It appears that the net inflow on capital account of our external payments has more than offset the large deficit of $ 7 billion on the current account. So, has external confidence in the Indian economy suddenly reversed in such a dramatic manner? Has the risk of an impending payments crisis been really averted? There seems to be something more than meets the eye in the above context.

Coupled with the above, we now have a declining rate of inflation. The wholesale price index as of March 6 shows an increase of only 6.8 per cent over wholesale prices on March 7, 1992. But then, we had a lucky break this past year, in an abundant harvest. Wholesale prices of cereals are down by 5.8 per cent as compared to this time last year. Fibre prices (raw cotton and jute) have declined by 19 per cent, and oilseeds prices by 12.8 per cent. As a result, edible oil prices have declined by 6.3 per cent over the year. The harassed housewife must be thankful, though the scenario on the employment front continues to be quite bleak. And, this time next year, we may not be quite as lucky. The weather gods do not as of today appear to be equally kind in regard to the coming monsoon.

But the foreign exchange reserves position has obviously emboldened the government to announce a further dose of liberalisation of industrial policy. Licensing has been totally withdrawn in respect of a number of 'white goods' like automotive passenger vehicles, refrigerators, etc. Even foreign investment in these areas is to be allowed. Of course, not much foreign investment is expected in these areas. The Indian market is still quite small to warrant the setting up of any large new manufacturing enterprise for the production of such goods.

The author, a distinguished economist, is a former Member of the Planning Commission.

Is this then a mere cosmetic change? What did the government have in mind, if no foreign investment in these areas is likely? For, frankly, controls in areas where vested interests may get hurt as a result of deregulation, remain unchanged. Sugar is an example. But then, sugar involves politics, right from the growing of sugarcane (and its pricing) and the use of scarce irrigation water for cane growing by the sugar barons of Maharashtra, to myriad controls over the sugar industry. There is no relaxation in the control regime in regard to sugar.

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IN essence then the liberalisation of the policy in respect of 'white goods' is a gesture. It is a two-fold gesture. It is a signal to the international financial community that India is abjuring the path of central planning of investments and moving on to investments based entirely on market signals. Never mind that there is extreme inequality of distribution of income and wealth. Never mind that the priorities should today be the production of mass consumption goods, or for targeted export markets (which should be carefully chosen and meticulously planned) as the South Koreans have done in the past. (The example of South Korea comes to mind because so much is talked about today about the need for India to follow the South Korean example.)

The second gesture is intended for the foreign investor. No matter that the sectors mentioned have no appeal for the foreign investor today. It is the direction in which we are moving which is significant. The message, loud and clear, through both licensing policy and through changes in the rates of import duties, is that the market of some 150 to 200 million affluent Indians is now open for investors in the developed countries. And these changes hit the eye, because India has for long kept the lid on the production and/or import of consumer goods for the affluent sections of the population. If the manufacture of, say, passenger automobiles does not interest the foreign investor, there are all manner of other consumer goods which are now equally open.

There is perhaps a third objective which is more subtle. These policies are likely to draw the attention of the country away from more sinister developments in the offing. Critics would doubtless spend their time and energy on these (now) inconsequential issues. The really sinister policies are yet to unfold, but they are predictable. The moment Parliament goes into recess after the present Budget session, we would witness the quick (and quiet) implementation of the recommendations of the Rangarajan Committee concerning the privatisation of public sector enterprises.

Most national newspapers have been silent on the report of the Rangarajan Committee, but the *Observer of Business and Politics* (April 14, 1993) has spilled the beans. The main highlights of the report of the said committee (on disinvestment by the government of its shares in public enterprises) are given as a box item in the *Observer* cited above. These highlights are:

- Total privatisation of select PSEs, disinvestment of 49 per cent of equity in areas reserved for public sector and 74 per cent in non-reserved areas.
- Swapping external debt liabilities with equity.
- Application of general principles governing foreign and NRI investors to PSE disinvestment.
- No reservation for FIIs.
- Public issue best route for PSE disinvestment.
- Ten per cent of proceeds for expansion needs of PSEs.
- IMF's haste major factor in revenue losses due to disinvestment.
- Standing panel on disinvestment for specific recommendations.
- Discounted cash flow criterion, method for valuation of shares.

The above main recommendations of the Rangarajan Committee are so eloquent that they do not need either any elaboration or any comment. We would still briefly draw attention to a few aspects, but let us first see the composition of the Committee, to realise how important these recommendations and their potential dangers are. The Chairman of the Committee is the Reserve Bank Governor, C. Rangarajan. The members include former Finance Secretary (and currently, India's Executive Director on the Board of the IMF) K.P. Geethakrishnan, Finance Secretary Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Chief Consultant in the Finance Ministry Ashok Desai, Industry Secretary Suresh Kumar, and IDBI Chairman S.S. Nadkarni.

◆

LET us quickly go over a few of the recommendations. The target level of government ownership of shares wholly owned at present will vary from zero to 51 per cent, the latter in areas currently wholly reserved for the public sector (in order to retain majority control). But in most other instances, government ownership is going to be cut down sharply. As for the PSEs, the crumb of consolation is that 10 per cent of the sale proceeds are going to be used for their expansion. The balance would go to support the government's reckless policies of not cutting down wasteful government administrative expenditure, and not raising the required revenues to meet even current expenditures.

The most sinister part of the recommendations is the swapping of external debt liabilities with the equity of the PSEs. Note that the suggestion comes from a very high level and responsible committee of the government, not from the foreign lenders. The lenders, why, they would surely graciously consider any such offeres when they are made. This is the Latin American history of the 1980s being repeated. It is not for nothing that there has been an increase in India's foreign exchange reserves despite a current account deficit of $ 7 billion last year. The only wonder is that our foreign exchange reserves have not increased more sharply. Any investor or lender would, given the opportunity, like to expand his lending for such mighty pickings at so little cost.

It is difficult to imagine that the IMF/World Bank are not aware of these recommendations. In fact, the report gains credibility and support from gullible observers in India; for does not the report castigate the IMF for the poor showing of the last round of sales of PSE equity?

However, one point is clear. The report sets at rest the controversy on, and the government's denial in regard to the hand of the IMF in shaping India's economic policies. But then, who seriously doubted that? The Rangarajan

(Continued on page 26)

Challenges before Our Polity

I.K. GUJRAL

I felt greatly honoured and deeply touched when I was asked to deliver this year's Memorial Lecture in remembrance of a dear friend and an esteemed media leader—D.R. Mankekar.

He was an eminent journalist, a far-sighted editor and an incisive analyst of politics and national policies. In performing his tasks he was bold and upright. He could neither be bent nor cowed down by the whims of authority. In sum his professional integrity remained untarnished all through his life.

His intellect was restless. With remarkable energy he found time to author a wide variety of books that ranged from reporting the war scene to fiction. As an author he got acquainted with difficulties and tormenting experiences of creative writers whose copyrights were scantly respected by some unscrupulous publishers who would seldom render unto them what was due to them. With a missionary zeal he travelled all over the country to organise a vibrant guild of the authors that, with time, has come to acquire a high place of honour and esteem.

It is appropriate that the Authors' Guild and the Media Centre have jointly installed annual lectures to commemorate the memory of one whose areas of activity were so wide and varied.

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THE technological revolution now makes unfamiliar demands on practioners of the mass media. They must understand and utilise a wide range of hardwares effectively, and at the same time cope with demands for higher knowledge by their readers and viewers. The contemporary social milieu is changing with a staggering speed. The so far dormant voices and interests are emerging to demand their due. Only a journalist with unbiased mind can interpret these urges and corelate them with historical perspectives.

The author, who was the External Affairs Minister in the National Front Government (1989-90), was the Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting in the seventies and served as India's Ambassador to the former USSR thereafter. This contribution is based on the Fifth D.R. Mankekar Memorial Lecture that he delivered in New Delhi (March 16, 1993).

As a result, the mass media has now come to exercise a very powerful and persuasive influence on society—its views and its culture. This process has given birth to, what is called, the Mass Culture. Without assigning any value judgement, I would commend our understanding that Mass Cultures—unlike the Folk Arts—can be manipulated and imposed by the indigenous and alien elites.

Pervasive electronic media demolishes the people's own institutions and outlooks and imposes glamorous and glittering kinometic cultures. That with time, determines the social and political behaviours. Playing such a vital role the mass media do not always disseminate unbiased or colour-neutral information and knowledge. With remarkable sophistication they can even rewrite history and upset the prevailing harmony and social homogeneity. The electronic media particularly has the power to generate an illusionary perception of the real world, instead of offering a broader range of knowledge and viewpoints.

It was in this context that my friendship with D.R.—as I used to address him dearly—acquired an added dimension.

In the seventies I was intimately associated with problems of the mass media and their relationship with our society and its culture. As a Minister of Information and Broadcasting I had donned an uncomfortable robe that was both tight and tattered. Passage of time had shattered the belief that an officially controlled electronic media could be credible in public eye and therefore its capacity to shape opinion had already become marginal.

Two other related issues were adding to the widely shared distress of the media leaders. While freedom of the press was sacrosanct it was threatened by the ownership pattern of the newspapers, that inhibited the journalistic freedom. The Press Commissions had commended governmental action. But the prescribed remedies were viewed as worst than the disease. In the midst of the raging national debate, Mankekar wrote extensively and coined his famous quotable quote, "...Our press is free but not independent."

I say with regret that we neither succeeded in institutionally defending the independence of journalists nor were we able to liberate the electronic media from the official strangle hold.

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THE country was also faced with the challenges of massive inflow of information and cultural biases from outside. While there were some diverse voices in the context of the ownership pattern of newspapers, there was near unanimity that "free flow of information amongst the nations was a myth". The satellite and the Cable TV had not yet entered the Indian households but the radio and news agencies had already turned the media highways into one-way-streets. The Reuters, the Agencie-Francis and hordes of others inundated the columns of our journals. There was hardly any traffic in the reverse direction.

It was in this background that I had raised my voice of caution and protest in the 1970 session of the UNESCO. The First World's response was firmly negative. In the sessions of 1972 and 1974, first the USSR and later Canada changed their positions and supported the contentions of the Third World. They had their own reasons for doing so. The USSR was already upset by onslaughts of the BBC and Voice of America. No amount of technological muffling had helped. The Soviet intelligentsia had lost faith in what the Moscow Radio said. Canada's distress was on a different count. Proximity of the USA and its powerful telecasts had undermined its cultural identity. As its cultural policy resolution was to say later, the American cultural invasion was so massive that there was hardly any sphere that Canada could call its own. This awareness had hurt the nation's pride and induced efforts to retrieve some of the lost ground.

Our persistence in the UNESCO and the UNO ultimately caused adoption of a charter of the "New Information Order". But the massive Western powers did not yield an inch. They crippled the UNESCO till it capitulated.

Our own tragedy was on several counts. We perceived the implications of the situation in a limited way. We compared the quantum of news imported by the Reuters and others with the dismal export of the UNI and PTI. We failed to perceive that the situation was inducing a cultural dependency that would have far-reaching results. While some visionary thinkers like Mankekar addressed that a thin veil of national sovereignty could not be a strong barricade to safeguard the nation's economy or culture, the Third World—and more specifically India—had come to believe that an international code would bar the winds from entering our household. We did little to meet the coming challenge. Not that our technocrats and intellectuals were not aware of the momentum of information technology that was about to overwhelm us. All the same, our responses continued to be feeble and myopic. Successive governments would not reorder things internally to win back the faith of the people in its broadcasts nor would they cease to place their own faith in the efficacy of official propaganda. Captive Doordarshan and the AIR were viewed as instruments of power and authority and not as vehicles of knowledge and information. Nor was it appreciated that an un-informed (or mis-informed) society could neither participate in democratic processes nor join the adventures of socio-economic transformations. The ruling elites even now do not believe that free access to media fortifies the nation's mettle and enables it to cope with crises situations. Even Rajiv Gandhi had to listen to the BBC to get reliable information about the sad death of his mother.

Recently the BBC and the CNN more speedily told our people and the world outside about the Ayodhya incidents than what the AIR or the Doordarshan did.

I have spoken at some length about the media and its impact on social behaviours because, as things are, information and knowledge or lack of these, determine the political opinions and processes more than any other single factor.

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YOU will recall that nearly five decades ago, Nehru, on our behalf, had made a "Tryst with the Destiny". This rendezvous had summed up the commitments made by the liberation struggle. That had identified the shape, structure and philosophy of a Free India. The dawn of freedom, I recall with sadness, was soaked in blood. The agony of the millions who were victims of violence and migrations was causing pain and confusions. But the nation stubbornly refused to get deflected from the chosen path.

On August 17, 1947, Nehru went to Jalandhar to confront an angry mob that had gone through holocausts and horrifying brutalities. He courageously told them:

> Today you want to take revenge against Muslims, tomorrow you will be doing this against one another.

At that critical moment the nation's identity was firmly defined. We did not want to copy the theocratic Pakistan nor did we accept supermacy of any one culture, language or religion over the other. Ours was to be a commonwealth of the people living in harmony and peace enjoying equality of democratic rights. This was clearly stated in preamble of the Constitution when it said:

> We the People of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a Sovereign Democratic Republic and to secure to all its Citizens: Justice, social, economic and political: Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship: Equality of status and opportunity: and to promote among them all *Fraternity* assuring the *dignity of the individual and the Unity of the Nation.*

I have taken the liberty of quoting the lofty preamble in full because we often forget its inspiring words that had put us on the path of building a forward looking modern nation-state. The political process that the Constitution had spelt brought us both hope and glory. Not that our record has not been sometimes faulty but the democratic processes, all the same, have stood the test of time and fortified the nation's resilience.

Our major failure, if I may say so, has been that we gave scant respect to Part IV of the Constitution that enunciates the "Directive Principles of State Policy". With wisdom of hindsight one could say that in a way it was sad that the Constitution-makers did not make these enforceable by law. Perhaps they realised that process of social change had to be gradual or perhaps they overestimated the prudence and fervour of the succeeding generations. We have obviously belied their faith.

It has taken us nearly five decades to even enact a law to provide constitutional reinforcement to the panchayats and civic bodies. Unfortunately, the journey towards decentralisation of power and authority upto the grassroots level has been half-hearted and lacking conviction. The Indian nation-state can be consolidated and pulled out of its prevailing morass if we make our polity truly federal, and the electoral system is effectively immunised from the influences of money and muscle.

Article 41 also enjoins that the state should exert to make effective provisions for "right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement"; but we continue to doubt its wisdom. As a result, the ever increasing ranks of unemployed youth stare us in the face. An unemployed young man or a woman cannot be expected to sustain his/her faith in the electoral promises that prove false year after year. Neither the seven Plans nor the new economic policy framework holds out hope for them.

A noted journalist from America recently visited the shell-shocked Dharavi slum of Bombay to meet a chap living on pavement.

> He saw him having no house, nothing to call his own. He has been in Bombay over ten years now, came from his native village because he wanted to make money. Even ten years later, he has nothing—and it is this lack of opportunity for upward mobility that makes such people easy prey for the fundamentalist few. The oppressed have a grouse against society, the fundamentalist steps in and gives that grouse a focus ...

This may not be a profound revelation to us who remain unmoved while witnessing this phenomenon every day and everywhere.

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TO revert to the Directive Principles that had also ordained the state to provide compulsory education for children and promote education and economic interests of the weaker sections and inculcate scientific temperament. All these remain cynically unaccomplished resulting in apathy and the sway of the revivalists.

While at it, may I point out that perhaps the Constitution-makers had a premonition of December 6, 1992 happenings in Ayodhya. Therefore, they had enjoined the state, in Article 49

> ....to protect every monument or place or object of artistic or historic interest to be of national importance from spoilation, removal, disposal ....

It is indeed depressing that the political elite has turned the Constitution into a holy book to be only sworn by while entering the office and then forgotten.

A noted journalist—former editor of *New York Times,* Rosenthall—recently came back to acquaint himself with the post-Ayodhya India. After several days of stay in Bombay and Delhi he observed the consequence of the communal fury when he said:

> It was an unqualified disaster. Look, you just cannot kick 110 million Muslims out of your country. It is not on, that way Fascism lies. You have got to live together, work together. You need unity—and more importantly, you have to be prepared to pay the price for that unity...

You will agree that it is both embarrassing and humiliating to be told by even friendly foreigners what we should be knowing and doing.

It was even more depressing to read what Rosenthall said after meetings with our leaders:

> ....(they) all are very polite, very courteous, very hospitable. But I don't know there is something missing. Call it verve, enthusiasm, exuberance ... they don't seem to have that glint in the eye—like Nehru did—.

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AT this major turning point of our history we have to ask ourselves: what are we seeking?

Some believe that the entire political culture of the nation has to be changed. The glorious history of freedom struggle and all that followed should be edited and the Constitution of the first Republic should be discarded. In one word, the nation's identity should be redefined.

There may be nothing wrong in this at its face value. Change is inherent in a dynamic society. For nearly five decades we have constantly changed—socially, politically and in the sphere of economy. The complaint is that this change has been slow and not radical enough.

The contemporary debate is shirking these issues and focussing on pushing the vehicle of the nation-state in reverse gear. The proposed agenda assigns higher priority to fighting out the centuries-old feuds. Such revivalist programmes have a purpose: to usher in a theocratic state—by whatever name it may be called. A model that would inevitably take the nation to the edge of the precipice.

It was both a necessity and a firm conviction that our democratic polity had subordinated religion to civil authority and made secularism a governing principle of the state. Often we slipped from this prudent path and subordinated secularism to political expediency. Now the nation has been shaken out of this mire. Challenges of the fundamentalists of all hues are grave and precipitous. We must know that rival communal fundamentalist schools sustain each other. Social harmony and homogeneity gets retarded. More than this, they generate aversion for modernity and scientific temper. The nation is compelled to shift its attention from the future to the past. Inevitably this would perpetuate backwardness, poverty and illiteracy.

Yet saying all this does not mean that I am pleading for the status quo. Not at all. On the contrary I urge in favour of a far-reaching and speedy transformation to end the prevailing stagnatioin that would enable the nation—the whole of it and not only the elite—to enter the contemporary era of science and technology.

Every generation has to spell the paradigms of its national agenda. We are a composite society with rich cultural diversities. The quest for discovering commonalities—in order to unify—must continue to remain first on the nation's list of priorities. We must learn from the extinction of the Soviet Union at least one lesson: unity of diversities survive only when each one of them breaths freely and neither their language nor their religious practices nor their cultures feel threatened from those who may be numerically larger or economically stronger.

It is equally important for us to remember that reforms of our electoral processes and making the federal polity more credible are urgently needed, to sustain the dynamic unity of the nation.

In conclusion may I say that like many others I feel anxious and concerned but also enthused when I notice the youth marching from Gandhiji's samadhi—full of determination—to defeat the obscurantist divisive forces? If D.R. Mankekar were alive today, I am sure, he would have written with fervour to strengthen their resolve. He would have marched with them to inspire them and thus helped in sustaining our faith in a United Secular Modern India that assigns a high place to speedy dispensation of social justice and implementation of the Constitution's Directive Principles. ■

Glossary 1993

PARVATRI

CONGRESS PARTY	A party which has made it a fine art to digress
BJP	Break-dance Jiving Petrifiers (as seen on top of Babri Masjid)
SHIV SENA	VISH SENA (poison spreaders)
SECULARISTS	Currently Neuter Gender, in a state of limbo
PSEUDO-SECULARIST LIBERAL	Those who continue to have Muslim friends
HINDUTVA	Flotsam and Jetsam, descendants of PANDAVAs known for fratricide
KAR SEVAKS	Devotees who come forward to do constructive work (not to be confused with THOD SEVAKS)
THOD SEVAKS	Organised Labour to break 3M (Muslim Monuments and Mosques)
MINORITIES	Resident Indians who remember 1947, before and after
MAJORITY	A whole bunch of people about whom no one really has a clue
PUBLIC SECTOR INVESTMENTS	AIDS (All Investors Diddled Systematically)—No signs of a cure

DOCUMENT

Summary of Alternative Economic Survey

The following is a press release giving the summary of the Alternative Economic Survey (1992-93)—prepared under the aegis of the Public Interest Research Group, New Delhi—that was released on April 1, 1993. —Editor

Our country is facing an unprecedented crisis. This has to be seen in the context of the systemic multiple crises everywhere—the East, the South and the West, calling into question all the contending ideologies. The globalisers of the Indian economy do not seem to realise the global, systemic, multi-faceted and interconnected nature of these crises. Hence based on a selective view of the global scene India is being globalised at the wrong time, under the wrong external environment by a wrong leadership, by a divided party, under challenge from a power-hungry Opposition. We are being sold a wrong strategy of gambling on the greedy and neglecting the needy. As a result, instead of trying to use the market as a good servant, we are making ourselves its slave.

The growth performance of the economy, the prime focus of our economic policy, which is a misleading indicator, concealing many structural, distributional and environmental distortions and crises, faltered and is below official expectations. Owing to deep-seated macro imbalances as seen in the persistence gap between savings and investments, public expenditure and public revenue, exports and imports, growth of demand and supply, availability of labour and its absorption, the revival of the growth rate to over five per cent level experienced during the disastrous 1980s is highly uncertain entailing heavy long-term costs. Hyper growth of trade, financial, personal and public services is distorting and straining the economy in various ways. Falling public support to the infrastructure sector is queering the pitch for growth, making the state go in for the costly and risky option of privatisation.

Agriculture with its declining share in the GDP at a little below one-third, but still called upon to support two-thirds of our large and growing labour force, in addition to remaining prone to weather induced fluctuations, seems to be losing steam. Food production, practically stagnant around 176 million tonnes, is finding it difficult to reach the 180 million level and is well below the mode plan targets. Inter-regional, inter-crop (against coarse grains) and inter-class imbalances, declining investment in general and especially in irrigation, rising cost of production making food prices unaffordable for about 48 per cent of people below the 'povertyline' (which has remained unchanged at the level fixed in the 1960s), per capita daily food availability at 476 grams, hardly sufficient for normal energy needs, trends towards shift of acerage away from cereals to high-priced commercial crops, lack of any breakthrough in dry-farming, land reforms, particularly redistribution of land, etc. are some of the main features of our agriculture. Little wonder we are witnessing in Koraput, Bolangir, Palamau, Kalahandi, etc. the beginning of our little *Somalias*.

The rural scenario continues to deteriorate owing to inadequate uncertain and reduced resource deployment and leaky programme implementation which suffer from toutism, topism and tokenism. Since poverty, unemployment, inequities and inflation impact the rural sector most severely, the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) is hitting the rural sector especially. Panchayat raj enactments are likely to remain paper tigers owing to the fossilised rural power structure and bureaucratism.

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THE artificiality of the much trumpeted industrial revival of the 1980s exploded into the open with a negative rate of growth in 1991 which continued at an all time low during 1992-93. The officially paraded marginally higher rate of growth of industry, well below both the recent experience and targets, is sheer window-dressing, based as it is on the low base of the point of reference. The index of industrial production (IIP) at around 206 is well below the last year's average of about 212 and the earlier peak of 265. Thus, even with a low absolute level of industrial production, false satisfaction is sought to be generated by means of the alchemy of growth rates. Availability of industrial goods, employment, exports, profit, etc. derive from the level of industrial production and, despite the booming primary issue market, registration of new industrial projects and approval to foreign investors, there is little good news. With cut in public investment, change over of the policy goals from fuller employment to exit of firms and retrenchment of organised industrial workers, both in large and small private and public sick industrial sector, sluggish exports, continuing inflationary pressures and dips in domestic purchasing power, cost-push through imported capital and intermediate goods at depreciating exchange rate and trends in global trade scenario, the industrial revival seems distort.

Globally opened up and deregulated industrial sphere is turning hostile to the well-being and growth of the small sector which in the aggregate is the biggest component of our manufacturing sector. The spread of industrial sickness to nearly 2.5 lakh such units, in addition to nearly 1500 large and medium units, indicates the combined effect of systemic breaks, negative effects of various schemes of incentives, misuse of scarce capital, lack of both markets and marketing and the black sector. Thus, so far, the SAP has succeeded basically in sapping the energies of our industrial sector.

The impact of the nearly stagnant agriculture with some dangerous portents for the future, recession-hit industry and macro-economic imbalances can be seen quite vividly in the performance of the external sector. It is the head-on emergence of the external liquidity crisis which triggered off the drive towards the SAP, and the latter, through premature and excessive opening up in an unenviable external environment marked by recession, protectionism, intense trade wars, regional groupings, competitive interest rate changes and hot money flows, is poised to intensify our long-term external solvency crisis. Trade deficit is mounting up, with exports refusing to pick up while imports are racing up, the expected trade deficit magnitude of 7 billion US dollars, alongwith 9 million dollars of annual debt-servicing caused by over 80 billion dollars of external debt is being financed by growing exceptional borrowing. Some of the adverse consequences of trade liberalisation can be seen in the squandering of the largely borrowed foreign exchange, recently liberalised gold and silver imports. Collection of nearly Rs 300 crores by means of customs duty on bullion imports is portrayed as a measure of success! Another indication of similar misallocation is the jump in the value of dry fruits from Rs 30 crores to Rs 300 crores in a matter of five years. A disconcerting feature is that devaluation and continued depreciation of the rupee could not improve our export performance. The most disturbing thing is that non-specific, conditionalities-ridden, external loans, which do not build identified capacity, either to earn or save foreign exchange, put long-term economic prospects in jeopardy. So long as trade deficit has to be financed out of fresh borrowing, the past debts are served by fresh borrowing, which is accompanied by the conditions which deny us the option of building an inward-oriented, self-reliant economy, the attempted globalisation would place India increasingly at the receiving end in the no-nonesense international marketplace. Non-recognition of such a binding debt-trap is the hall-mark of the official Economic Survey.

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ANOTHER dimension of the SAP is the jettisoning of India's public enterprises (PEs). Despite the most hostile operational policy and ideological environment, in terms of growth of output, sales, capacity-utilisation, contribution to the financing of Central plan outlays, profits, overall rate of savings and containment of budget deficit, PEs showed improvements. Privatisation of profit-making PEs with the denial of the funds so raised to the PEs, put a serious question mark on the sagacity of the SAP. It may be noted that the recorded singular successes of the SAP so far have largely been confined in the rest of the world to such denudation and denigration of the PEs. This has also reduced employment opportunities in the organised sector.

The tragedy of the PEs is that the state which brought them into existence is now dead set to dismantle them in a manner inimical to the interests of the PEs, the people at large whose savings and sacrifices made it possible for the PEs to come into existence and even to the public exchequer. The process of disinvestment, devised by persons hauled up for corruption and dictated by the international lenders is basically geared to meet the revenue expenditure needs of the Central Government. Thus on the one hand, the fiscal crises of the state are being met by indiscriminate borrowing which burden the future generations and, on the other, by disposing of the past savings of society which deprives the future generation any benefit from the past sacrifices. The managements of the PEs are going to face double accountability of both the government agencies and of the shareholders who might well be big business, either Indian or foreign or both. The scams relating to disinvestment and portfolios management schemes participated in by the PEs are not even being probed. Thus huge and valuable assets of the PEs are being offloaded for a song, putting a question mark on their viability and survival.

The SAP which is basic to our deteriorating policy environment owes both to the external sector imbalance as also to severe weakening of the financial strength and capacity of the Central Government. The main elements of the emerging public finance scenario are the following:

a) Continued high level of revenue deficit. Budget deficit is higher on an average basis than on yearend basis.
b) Initiation of give-away budgets by tax reduction, based on discredited supply side economics.
c) Decline in the Centre's support to the finances of the States and of PEs.
d) Reduction in real terms in plan outlay during 1991-92—five per cent increase in real terms but decline as a proportion of the GDP. Fall in capital formation by the Centre alongwith large savings-investment gap.
e) Rising share of external finance in total plan outlay; as high as 14 per cent in 1992-93.
f) Rising internal and external debt leading to interest payments becoming as large as one-fourth of the total government expenditure.
g) Increasing concession in taxes to the rich like virtual scrapping of tax on most important and common forms of wealth, like financial assets.

The sins of omission in the fiscal policy from the point of economic stability, capital formation, equity and self-reliance are a legion.

The official Survey dismisses the biggest and gravest development of the year, namely, the massive, multi-faceted financial sector scam very lightly, possibly owing to its roots in the policy of liberalisation and direct culpability of the Finance Ministry, RBI and scores of other economic ministries, not to speak of connivance at the political level. The share market speculative boom based on the Budget for 1992-93, disinvestment scheme, public sector bonds and the total degeneration of the public financial institutions, leading to the unholy nexus with groups of unscrupulous brokers, disrupted the economy in many ways. The relative overgrowth of the financial sector creating massive unearned, speculative incomes points to serious long-term implications for the entire system.

Given the last decade (1981-82 to 1991-92) long spiral of 9.2 per cent of Consumer Price Index (CPI) and 7.6 per cent of Wholesale Price Index (WPI), the CPI and WPI went up by 25 points and 22.9 points respectively during the seven months (April-October 1992). This means substantial erosion of the purchasing power of the rupee. This has forced people to make downward adjustment in their consumption levels especially when the per capita annual income declined from Rs 2199 in 1991-92 to Rs 2174 in 1990-91. This also shows a transfer of income from the poor and weaker sections to the better-off sections. Thus, the living standards of a vast majority have become even more precarious. But these harsh facts are understated and distorted in various official handouts, including the Annual Economic Survey. These facts are distorted by presenting the changes in price index over the corresponding period in the previous year as percent change, which means that any given level of absolute increase will appear smaller than higher in the base. Thus, any price rise following a higher initial level is presented as a lower rate of inflation.

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WITH growing inflation, the role of the Public Distribution System (PDS) becomes vital. But the very design of the PDS, particularly universal access to all, mismatches between the total supplies put through the PDS channels and the total size of the PDS offtake in relation to food production. Despite growing food production and rising prices, the PDS offtake has reached a plateau. It is not able to cross the barrier of 18 to 20 million tonnes a year. Even the much publicised revamping of the PDS has contributed only an extra quantity of one million tonnes during January-October 1992.

At the same time, there are regional variations in terms of PDS allocations. For instance, UP, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Orissa, where 44 per cent of our population live, share only a little over one-fifth of the PDS allocations.

The Budget for 1992-93 has provided for Rs 2500 crores as food subsidy with an additional Rs 250 crores under the revamped PDS. Without the rise of issue price, the subsidy bill would have mounted to Rs 3980 crores. But due to hike, the subsidy now amounts to Rs 1500 crores only. Thus a burden of Rs 2480 crores has been passed on the consumers. Even under the revamped PDS scheme for 1700 blocks, everyone including non-tribal, big landlord and other powerful sections of the society are included. How far the revamped PDS will be able to serve the poorer sections with additional supplies and close targetting remain to be seen. Already reports of starvation deaths in Palamau in Bihar, Kalahandi in Orissa and drought-hits areas of Rajasthan indicate that the revamped PDS has failed to protect the poorer and weaker sections from the onslaught of market forces.

The employment conditions in India are deteriorating especially during the eighties. Nearly 36 million people were registered as unemployed before the present set of economic reforms began. According to estimates, nearly 6.6 million jobs were lost during the first year of economic reforms. During the next two years, employment would be lower by as much as eight to 10 million persons per year. Thus, India will have 55 to 60 million jobless citizens by 1995. Besides the jobless, the working class will be badly affected by the harsh measures such as erosion of workers' rights, wage freeze, union-bashing and deteriorating health and safety conditions. Women workers would be the worst suffers with the intensification of the retrenchment policies.

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What is the economic contribution of women to the national wealth of India? There is no mention in the official Economic Survey about the women's role in with the Indian economy or how women are coping the impact of the new economic policies. The mainstream development economics looks at subsistence production, homework, childcare and other non-market activities as valueless in economic accounting. The recent increase in the issue prices of wheat and rice has further added to the inflationary pressures in the economy. But, these effects are felt more severely by the women and children. Indian women, who rank very low in terms of international ranking, are carrying a bigger share of the structural adjustment policies. With rising inflation, mounting unemployment, falling wages and cuts in subsidies on basic goods and public services, the poor Indian women, both in rural and urban areas, are facing the daily survival crisis of their families.

Similarly, the official Economic Survey as well as many conventional economists have not looked into the relationship between economy and natural environment. They ignore the fact that for the vast population of India, the natural environment is not a luxury but the very basis of their subsistence economy. Forests, land, rivers directly meet their food, water, housing, energy and cutlural needs. To earn foreign exchange the government has initiated a number of policies which will create serious environmental imbalances.

Recently, the government has cleared eleven 100 per cent export-oriented deep-sea fishing ventures in the private sector, with foreign collaboration. The Tatas are going ahead with a large-scale shrimp farming project adjoining India's most valuable brackish wetlands, the Chilka Lake. Under the liberalised environment, the Environment Departments in all States and at the Centre are becoming everyone's punching bag. Despite objections from wildlife officials, several private sector industries have been cleared adjacent to a Marine National Park in Gujarat. With the acceleration of five-star tourism and commercial crops cultivation and growing privatisation of common property resources, the future of India's natural environment is quite bleak, especially for the poor people. ■

Ambedkarism versus Hindutva

YOGINDER SIKAND

In recent years there has been a phenomenal growth of ideologically-based movements and counter-movements in India. The Dalits, who were once passive victims of a cruel and inhuman social order, have now begun to assert their identity, speak for themselves, and demand their rights. By far the most influential ideological trend among them is radical Ambedkarism. As a response to the challenge that the Dalits and other oppressed groups have mounted, conservative and status-quoist social forces have now swung from being on the defensive to unleashing the *Hindutva* offensive. The future of Indian society critically hinges on the outcome of this battle between Ambedkarism and *Hindutva.*

Ambedkarism and *Hindutva* today stand mutually opposed in the same way as the Dalits and the 'upper' castes have been opposed to each other for centuries. Technically speaking, according to the Brahminical *Dharmashastras,* the Dalits are not Hindus since they are considered to be outcastes, falling outside the pale of the Hindu caste system (*chaturvarna*). This being the case, Ambedkarites contend that it is incorrect to speak of the Dalits as being part of the "Hindu community". A community is a group of people united by a strong feeling of oneness and brotherhood. Such a feeling is present only among members of the same caste and does not extend to people belonging to other caste groups. In this sense, each caste could be said to be a community by itself. This was the view of Babasaheb Ambedkar who wrote:

> The first and foremost thing that must be recognised is that 'Hindu society' is a myth...They (the 'Hindus') did not feel the necessity of a common name because they had no conception of having constituted a community...A caste has no feeling that it is affiliated to other castes except when there is a 'Hindu'-Muslim riot. On all other occasions each caste endeavours to segregate itself and to distinguish itself from all other castes...There is an utter lack among the 'Hindus' of what sociologists call 'consciousness of kind'. There is no Hindu consciousness. In every 'Hindu' the consciousness that exists is the consciousness of his caste. That is why the 'Hindus' cannot be said to form a society or a nation.

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If the Dalits today see their movement for liberation as being based on their identity as a separate community, the advocates of *Hindutva* claim to be engaged in establishing 'Hindu' unity, and they are making special efforts to woo the Dalits to their camp. They are trying hard to appropriate the image of Ambedkar, and even go to the extent of claiming that they alone are his true torch-bearers. That the very same social forces against whom Ambedkar spent his whole life struggling should now claim to be his true representatives is indeed ironical.

Ambedkar found Brahminical Hinduism to be the root cause of the inhuman oppression of his people, and this led him to seek refuge in Buddhism. In his book, *Riddles of Rama,* he opined that Rama was an ardent champion of the *chaturvarna* system. Rama slew the Shudra, Shambuka, merely for his having violated the law against Shudras meditating to enter the heavens. Ambedkar termed this act as "the worst crime that history has ever recorded". He also declared that a *Hindu Rashtra,* another name for Brahmin Raj, would spell the doom not only for the Muslims, but also for the Dalits, Shudras, tribals and women—the vast majority of the Indian population.

Do the *Hindutva* advocates, who also claim to be Ambedkar's greatest followers, agree with his views on Hinduism, the Rama cult and the *Hindu Rashtra*? If they say they do, then their Rama crusade, to establish a *Hindu Rashtra* should appear to them to be without any justification whatsoever. If they say they do not, which they would if they are honest, then they have no right to mislead the Dalits by claiming to be the followers of Ambedkar.

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ONE of the most remarkable features of Brahminism is its ability to adjust itself to even the most unfavourable circumstances. Thus, when challenged by egalitarian Buddhism, Brahminism shed many of its rigidities, absorbed many of its opponent's features, proclaimed Buddha as an incarnation of Vishnu, drained Buddhism of its anti-Brahminical radicalism, and thereby drove it out of the country. The very same process is today being repeated in the case of Ambedkarism. Ambedkarism is being sapped of its radical content as *Hindutva* seeks to incorporate Ambedkar into its vast pantheon of deities in a bid to win over the Dalits and put a firm halt to their movement against Brahminical hegemony.

As long as the Dalits and Shudras were docile and passive, accepting their miserable lot as divinely ordained, the Brahminical forces found no reason to advocate 'Hindu' unity and instead publicly stressed their own supremacy. Now, however, since the Dalits and Shudras have begun asserting themselves, 'Hindu unity' has emerged as the only means to preserve Brahminical supremacy. Central to this is the deliberate creation and projection of an 'anti-Hindu' monster in the form of Muslims, Dalits and Shudras, who otherwise would have been led to attack the oppressive Brahminical order, are now goaded to attack the Muslims instead. It is, therefore, not at all surprising that it is only now, when the oppressed castes are threatening the Brahminical elite, that the *Hindutva* camp has unleashed its anti-Muslim Ayodhya crusade.

In a democratic polity obviously the majority has the right to rule. The oppressed castes account for more than seventy per cent of the Indian population, while the 'upper' castes form not more than fifteen per cent. By seeking to construct a unified Hindu political community, the Brahminical minority, which claims to be the divinely appointed leader of that 'community', seeks to legitimise its own undemocratic hegemony by employing the logic of majoritarian democracy. Even though the Dalits and Shudras form the overwhelming majority, they would obviously not be the rulers in a *Hindu Rashtra*. It is needless to say that the much-talked-about *Hindu Rashtra* would see the 'upper caste' minority elite establish its own rule in the name of the 'Hindu majority'. As it is, the RSS and its allied outfits are all controlled by Brahmins, and there are hardly any Dalits, Shudras, tribals and women in their top-level decision-making bodies.

If a state is to be identified with a particular religion, the laws laid down by that religion would have to be made the law of the land. For instance, Iran is an Islamic state because the Islamic law (*Shariat*) is enforced there. Similarly, if India is to be a *Hindu-Rashtra* the Hindu law, based essentially on the *Manusmriti*, would have to be made the law of the land. The *Manusmriti* is nothing but the law of caste, the law of Brahminical supremacy and the subjugation of the oppressed castes and women. M.S. Golwalkar, the RSS supremo, used to speak out in glowing terms in praise of the *Manusmriti*. In his book, *Bunch of Thoughts*, he even went to the extent of declaring that:

> Brahmin is the head, Kshatriya the hands, Vaishya the thighs, and Shudra the feet. This means that the people who have this four-fold arrangement—the Hindu people—are our God.

Today, however, the *Hindutva* camp is careful not to publicly voice its support for the *Manusmriti* and it does not openly champion Brahminical supremacy. However, from time to time, people such as the VHP's 'Swami' Vamdev do reveal their true colours and advocate the revival of the Brahminical *chaturvarna* system. Golwalkar's espousal of the *Manusmriti* in the first edition of the book, *Bunch of Thoughts* (1966), has been carefully omitted in the latest (1980) reprint of the book. It is not that the *Hindutva* camp has suddenly developed an aversion to their cherished hero Manu, but that they understand that publicly declaring support for his code will alienate the oppressed castes who today are struggling to win their rights.

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THE advocates of *Hindutva* now declare that they do not recognise caste. This claim seems to be motivated not by any anti-caste progressivism but by a desire to ignore the problems of Dalits and Shudras which are a product of their caste-status. By being silent on caste-related issues, the *Hindutva* camp, far from being the anti-caste crusaders they pose to be, are only contributing to the further suppression of the marginalised castes whose myriad problems can only be solved by addressing these caste-related issues rather than by sweeping them under the carpet. This policy of not taking up caste-related issues can only result in the further perpetuation and strengthening of the caste system. Any concessions given to the downtrodden castes to overcome their disabilities would be ruled out on the filmsy excuse that they would encourage casteism and divide the 'Hindus'. This is how the *Hindutva* camp sought to scuttle the reservation policy for the OBCs (Shudras).

The oppressed castes have a religious culture of their own that is strinkingly different from that of orthodox Brahminism. The culture that the *Hindutvawadis* seek to impose on these castes in the name of Hinduism is highly Brahminical. By propagating this culture among the masses, the *Hindutva* camp seeks to deny the legitimacy of the culture, values and world-views of the oppressed castes. Dalit culture is replete with anti-orthodox elements which could be used in mobilising the Dalits against the harsh exploitation that they are today being subjected to. However, by imposing the Brahminical culture on them, the *Hindutvawadis* destroy these radical aspects of Dalit culture, leading to the emasculation of the oppressed and their eventual incorporation as willing slaves into the system of Brahminical control and hegemony. Through this process of 'Sanskritisation', the Dalits are made to imbibe the values of their historical oppressors and are thus rendered incapable of developing a radical counter-culture based on their memory of a long history of their resistance to exploitation.

Most of the poor in India belong to the marginalised castes and, conversely, the vast majority of the members of these castes are miserably poor. Yet, the *Hindutva* camp, obsessed with anti-Muslim issues which it projects as religious issues, is almost totally silent on the poverty of the masses. This silence may be construed as support for the maintenance of the inequitous status-quo. Advocating the unity of the oppressors and the oppressed, feudal lords and their starving Dalit slaves, in the guise of promoting 'Hindu unity' can only result in the further oppression of the poor.

To silence their critics, the *Hindutvawadis* have floated some outfits such as the '*Vanwasi Seva Ashrams*' and '*Seva Bharati*' that they claim are working for the poor. Whenever they are attacked for deliberately ignoring the poor, they quickly point to these organisations to refute the allegations of their opponents. These show-pieces are exhibited as 'proof' of their 'concern for the poor' in much the same way as the Sikander Bakhts and Arif Begs are paraded around as 'proof' of the BJP's 'secularism'. The *Hindutvawadis*, to pose as friends of the Dalits, made a Dalit lay the foundation stone of their proposed Rama temple at Ayodhya.

But Dalits have, for centuries, been sweating and toiling building the most lavish temples for the Brahmin priests, and by making a Dalit lay the foundation stone, the *Hindutvawadis* are merely stressing that in their scheme of things Dalits ought not to deviate from their traditional degrading occupations and roles.

The fate of India's 150 million Dalits today hangs in the balance. Their future critically depends on how they will respond to the *Hindutva* counter-movement. The Dalit movement has either to broaden its base and join hands with other marginalised groups or face extinction by allowing itself to be appropriated and swallowed up by the forces of *Hindutva*. ■

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Secularism and Social Transformation in India—II

RASHEEDUDDIN KHAN

The author, a former Member of the Rajya Sabha, is the Director, Indian Institute of Federal Studies, New Delhi. He is a former Professor of Political Science, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He presented the following position paper at a seminar organised sometime ago by the Social Affairs Group of the India International Centre, New Delhi. It is being published in three instalments with a view to generate discussion on the issues raised. The first part appeared in Mainstream *(April 24, 1993).*

—Editor

IV : Communalism and National Fragmentation

Let us first comprehend the meaning and implication of 'communalism' in the context of India's politics and polity.

What is communalism? Adherence to religion and religious system is not communalism. Exploitation of religion is communalism. Attachment to a religious community or religiosity is not communalism. Using a religious community against other communities and against the nation is communalism. Affiliation to any social, cultural and service organ of a religious community may also not be communalism. But restricting one's sympathy, help, social obligations and range of services as citizens of a secular republic just only to the community of one's birth can be communalism. 'Affiliation' to ritualism, superstition, obscurantism, magic, charm and occult practices like astrology is not communalism. These are merely irrational unscientific, and primordial orientations, due to conformism to traditions, or to fear of the unknown and unbounded ambition. Even commitment to conservative values in social life and conservative orientation in politics is not communalism. It can be called social backwardness and political reaction. However, it should be recognised that all these aspects can be inputs into the development of communal consciousness, and indeed the communalists, in various permutation and combination, have utilised most of these aspects in order to build their communal, political base. But 'communalism' as a specific phenomenon in Indian polity is something different and more specific.

Let us pause at this point to realise that a real man of God, that is, a true believer in religion, is also expected to be a good human-being, and indeed most of the time he is. It is not uncommon to see deeply religious people, not only as good humanist and excellent neighbours but also as committed nationalists and patriots in their own way and on their own terms. It is wrong to assume that communalists are religious people, in the real sense of the word. Even those few who are both 'religious' and 'communal' act as communalists in politics largely by emphasising the dubious and contentious belief that their religion is a 'complete code of life and hereafter' for all time, hence politics and civic affairs cannot be segregated from religion. Historical experience in all parts of the world, and most clearly in India, has shown that this world of fancy and illusion soon degenerates into religious bigotry and political intolerance in the context of the politics of modern states, which are mostly multi-ethnic national sovereignties, integrating diverse religious communities. Indeed communalists become communalists precisely because they are ignorant of the moral teachings and universalists' underpinning of their own religion, which makes them, in essence, not only irreligious but also anti-national and anti-human. A communalist may not even respect and adhere to a religion except as a public posture, for a communalist is basically interested in 'using' religion, and that too not for any religious, spiritual or moral ends, but on the contrary for 'secular' ends (in the sense of statecraft and politics), therefore for meta-religious or non-religious mundane political ends, attuned for aggrandisement of power, position and wealth.

Communalism is perversion of religion from a moral order to a temporal arrangement of contemporary convenience, from a faith into a constituency, from a strategy of living into tactics of politics, from an end to a means. Communalism exploits parts of religious dogma for expedient political purposes. Communalism seeks to conform arbitrarily religious tenets, tradition and values to suit the exigencies of current political life and tactical interests. Communalism thus is exploitation, naked and subtle, of religion, and of genuine attachment to a religious community. Communalism is promoted by a real or an imaginary fear of the other communities. Communalism is conversion of religiosity into political bellicosity. Communalism is the enemy of progress, revolution, democracy, and of federal nation-state building on rational scientific lines. In this sense communalism is not a phenomenon of conservative reaction but of modernised reaction.

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THEN how do we define communalism? Communalism is basically an ideology of *political allegiance to a religious community* as a primary and decisive group in the polity, and for political action. Communalism is a modern phenomenon, and not a phenomenon of the mediaeval past. It is a sectarian, restrictive and negative response to the process of modernisation, and modern nation-building. Communalism envisages a religious community alone as a base and universe of its political ambition and action. Communalism is perception of other religious communities as inimical entities within a polity and within a nation, arranged in an unfriendly antagonistic and belligerant equation one to another.

Communalism is a political orientation that recognises religious community and not the nation and the nation-state as the terminal community—the final point of political allegiance. Therefore, communalism is a political strategy opposed to nationalism as an aggregation of multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual communities.

Communalism is opposed to secularism as a pattern of socio-cultural coexistence and political integration. Communalism is opposed to a rational civic basis of party formation and political system. Communalism perceives majorities and minorities as segments and divisions within a polity and a nation, based essentially on religious communities and not even on any other ascriptive basis (like that of family, clan, tribe, *jati,* language, region or domicile), and certainly not on the basis of political, ideological, party, class interests or strata considerations, which is the hall-mark of a modern political system. Politicisation of religious community opposed to other communities and the nation then, is the main plank of communalism.

V : Colonialism and Communalism

It is interesting to remember that communalism as a term used in the special cannotation of religious and racial antagonism especially in India entered the English lexicon at about the same time, that is, mid-nineteenth century, when the British Crown became the imperial sovereign. This simultaneity is not a mere coincidence. It establishes, on the one hand, the causality link between 'occurrence in history' and etymology, and on the other, an organic link between the role of imperialism and the rise of communalism in India. Not that communities in the same religious sense did not exist earlier nor that antagonism between them was completely absent. The pertinent point is that in the activisation of this very antagonism, and its transformation from a latent and inward-looking religious cleavage into the most articulate socio-political divisive conflict, the presence and policy of British imperialism played a decisive and negative role.

Separatism in politics and politicisation of religious communities have been the two most detrimental contribution of British colonial administration in the emerging body-politic of undivided India. It should be realised that it was this structure, style and process of politics which eventually resulted in the vivisection of the nation and the partition of the country due to the manipulation of the withdrawing British imperial power in collaboration with the reactionary political exertions of the Muslim League, aided and abetted by other separatist forces of Hindu communalism.

The recognition of the fallacious and pernicious 'two-nation theory' implying that Hindus and Muslims *per se* and by definition were two seperate monolith religious communities was historically and sociologically a fallacious assumption. It completely overlooked not only the regional and linguistic variations in the Hindu and Muslim communities in India, it also overlooked the centuries-old heritage of inter-communal coexistence marked by mutual understanding between them as neighbours in

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Communalism is perversion of religion from a moral order to a temporal arrangement of contemporary convenience, from a faith into a constituency, from a strategy of living into tactics villages, localities, cities, regions, etc. The false slogan that Hindus and Muslims constituted 'separate nations', and therefore were entitled to 'separate territorial sovereignty' once British paramountcy lapses, was the most monumental blunder of contemporary Indian history. It destroyed not only the civilisational unity built over the centuries and the dominant pattern of composite culture evolved by a long drawn historic process of interaction, assimilation and synthesis of diverse ethnic groups and trends, but also violated the time-tested and universally accepted basic assumption of modern federal nation-building. It gave a disastrous shock to some of the cherished traditions of Indian polity and social life—traditions of accommodation and reconciliation, of respect and recognition of diversities of toleration and goodwill, of creative and innovative harmonisation of trends, tendencies, beliefs, customs, etc. It annihilated a gracious part of India's historical personality, and projected instead an irrational, invidious and untenable proposition that 'religion' alone is the criterion of identifying a nation and therefore of state-building.

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THE recognition of the principle of religion alone as the basis of modern state-formation and state-craft, had far-reaching repercussions on the polity and politics of the subcontinent of South Asia, or what is historically referred to as the Hindustan subcontinent. In Pakistan it has given a handle to the religious groups to assert their political ambition in the name of Islam. This has led to an endless crises of political identity in Pakistan, and has weakened the process of secular modern politics there. In India, as a repercussion, it has legitimised communal politics. These two structural developments have vitiated secular politics in the subcontinent. They have distorted contemporary political traditions, political culture and political functioning, whose negative impact on the evolution of new national identities both in India and Pakistan, are all too apparent.

The first consequence of this development was the birth of an avowedly Muslim communal state of Pakistan, whose politics domestically has been marked by the persistence of the 'mullah-in-mufti' syndrome, signifying an alliance of theologians, the military-junta and a combination of bureaucratic and commercial elite, which has repudiated not only the pretention of secular democracy, envisaged in Jinnah's speeches and statements after independence, but also frustrated all attempts of civilian rule and restoration of genuine representative political system in Pakistan.

The spill-over of Pakistan's persistent Muslim communalism (despite its formal masquerading as Muslim nationalism and national identity) across the borders has created problems for India, especially in the wake of Sikh militancy—marked by the Bhindranwala pehnomenon, the Khalistan demand, Indira Gandhi's assassination, the November riots in Delhi, the see-saw in Akali politics—all contributing to inter-communal tensions and conflicts and to unabated terrorism from Pakistan, has given a new edge to inter-state communal politics within India, itself.

Another consequence of the recognition of religion as the *raison d' etre* of politics, as exemplified by the creation of Pakistan, has been the strengthening of the communalist ideology in India. It has contributed in no small measure in providing a tradition, a base and a legitimacy to communal politics in sovereign democratic India. Partition has not only divided the country, but it has also divided the language and idiom of politics in the subcontinent, by promoting and legitimising the communal diction, as a recognised and acceptable idiom, together with the other idiom, namely the national idiom of politics. The repercussion of partition on domestic Indian politics has been to divide Indian politics itself into one based on multi-religious, multi-lingual and multi-regional aggregation, orientation and articulation.

Further, by so doing it has not only fragmented national politics on erroneous and irrational lines, but also distorted the process of democratic federal nation-building in India, and impaired the foundations of the emerging edifice of secular-civic culture. Communalisation of politics has also postponed the shift from ascriptive based feudal, atavistic, emotionally charged passion-politics, which in essence is anti-democratic, to interest-cum-class based democratic politics, resting on the recognition of individual citizens, as equal and free members of the polity, without discrimation made on the basis of tribe, *jati*, domicile, language, gender, etc.

VI: Repercussion of Communalism on the Indian Polity

Given this context and the prevalent political traditions of communalisation of politics, the working of the Indian political system could not steer clear of the communal idiom and aggregation. The logic and processes of adult franchise, periodic elections, competing party-system, etc. has provided legitimacy and protection of law to all political parties, socio-cultural organisations, formations, groups, etc., both communal and nationalistic. Therefore, this otherwise positive framework of political system and processes has ironically also provided a 'blanket protection' to all manifestly and proclaimed communal formations. Democratic protection is provided to non-democratic, even anti-democratic, elements on the assumption that discrimination between parties or groups on any count might be arbitrary and authoritarian, and anyhow it is against the principles of democratic open society, and that these elements should be fought 'politically' and 'socially' and not by resorting to legal means, much less to executive and administrative action. Undoubtedly there is considerable weight in this argument. And in an ideal or near ideal situation its efficacy can be proved and admired. But the situation which India is facing in terms of the historical background of communalism, the stage of socio-economic development, the level of political consciousness, the political experience of the last four decades, the increases in communal tensions, riots, conflicts, violence, and group and individual terrorism, calls for a sobering reappraisal of our political values, processes and the working of our political system.

India today appears a society prone to continuing communal violence and, political destabilisation. Much of this had been tolerated over the years under the mistaken belief that this is an unavoidable stage in the building of an open democratic polity. This was supposed to be a part of evolution. However, this might be one aspect of the situation; but frankly it also indicates a pathetic incapacity of the system. This is reflected in the indecision of the Executive, alternated by vacillation between 'firmness' and 'accommodation', in the divided counsel of parliamentarians and legislatrs based on their party tactics and power game, in the limited juristic view taken by the courts that occasionally give protection of law to criminals, anti-social elements, violent fanatics and habitual offenders. And all this is resulting in demoralisation of the administration and the police. This has contributed to a persistantly bizarre situation in national life for several years that can be described as an unmanagable tragic drift.

What are the current manifestations of communalism in India? To use the issues of the bygone past for settling scores in the present against another community is communalism. To punish the present generation for the real or imaginary misdeeds of the past generation is communalism. Communalism is also an attempt to generate inter-communal psychosis by raking up events and episodes of the mediaeval past. The communalists seek to use the past as a continuum of the present, for promoting inter-communal discord. They overlook themselves and confuse the other people about the basic characteristic of the ancient and the mediaeval ages marked as they were by feudal autocracy, religious bigotry, dynastic ambitions, migratory movements for empire-building, invasions, annexations, conquests, vandalism and tyranny. Dynasts, empire-builders and potentates, often indulged in vainglorious acts to acquire false recognition and prestige in one's own community and to exploit the impulse of the army and the bureaucracy to perpetuate their wordly ambitions by projecting the false garb of religious mandate. To punish innocent members of a community due to acts of omission or commission of few rulers or leaders of the same community in the past or in the present time, is rank communalism. To attack and murder a human being in a frenzy or riot, only because he belongs to another community, is the worst form of communalism. To incite communal animosity and hate by word of mouth or publication, particularly by using one's privileged position in profession and society, especially the media, is wicked and manifest communalism.

Today communalism in its varied shapes has acquired a most dangerous form and an alarming proportion. It is a multi-pronged challenge that seeks to disrupt India's multi-religious fraternity. It is an affront to India's nationalist identity, and tragic setback to our evolving secular culture. It is subversive of our political stability and economic development, and therefore manifests itself as enemy number one of our democratic polity.

(To be continued)

Iraq Heals War Wounds

HARISH CHANDOLA

Like a miracle, the Iraqi people with their hard work have healed the wounds inflicted on the body of their country in the Gulf war two years ago. They have repaired the destruction they had suffered and many of the things they have rebuilt have in fact turned out to be much better than what they used to be before the war.

Take the example of their most important highway, from the Jordanian border to Baghdad, and then right down to the port city of Basra, on the Shatt al-Arab waterway, stretching for 1500 kilometres. The Americans had bombed not only the bridges on it but also several of its elevated spans, at Ramadi, for instance. In the war photographs you could see them hanging limp, after the bombs had snapped them like twigs. The highway was riddled with craters caused by big bombs, and these craters had swallowed whole cars full of people while they were running away in the darkness of the night with no lights in the hope that the warplanes would not see them.

The body of Iraq had been riddled with wounds all over. As many as 110,000 air sorties had been flown against it, dropping 88,000 tonnes of bombs in 40 days. They destroyed 4000 schools, from kindergartens to universities from north to south and east to west, 132 bridges, 180 oil installations, including refineries and pipelines, 14 hospitals, scores of telephone exchanges and communication centres, radio and television stations, power plants, museums and marketplaces.

Ninety per cent of these have now been rebuilt by the Iraqis themselves, without any outside assistance.

Near the Indian Embassy, the gutted Adhamiya telephone exchange is fully functional again. Two of the major bridges over the Tigris in Baghdad, the Al Jamhouriya and the Al Shohada, have been fully repaired and are again crowded with traffic. The third, the July 14 bridge, is under reconstruction. The large communication centre in Baghdad, bombed repeatedly in the belief that it carried instructions from the Iraqi military high command to its forces in Kuwait, is working again. All the radio and television stations have been repaired and are functioning once more.

A brand new bright city, with its own marketplace has come up across the river from Mansour Miliya hotel, for the slum-dwellers who used to live there before the bombs drove them away.

Only the large conference centre, with a capacity of over 4000, built by an Indian company, remains in a state of destruction, perhaps to remind the people of the devastation their civilian infrastructure had suffered.

In the National Museum artisans are repairing centuries-old artefacts damaged in the American bombing. A number of them depicting the precious heritage of Iraq, have been stolen from various destroyed museums, like those of Saisan, Kufa, and even Baghdad, and smuggled out. I saw first century BC marble statues of a princess and three warriors in elaborate headgear, from Patra, being reconstructed and repaired.

Also receiving the healing touch at the artisans' hands was a first century AD marble statue of Hercules, still carrying his massive metal-studded mace. The night bombers of the Western world had tried to kill that Greek warrior god as he rested in an Iraqi museum.

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I was in Baghdad during the second anniversary of the Gulf war. At the Amiriyeh air shelter, the people were holding a remembrance service for the 405 women, children and old people killed inside that shelter in an American missile attack.

Outside, the two-metre-thick concrete shell of the shelter stood intact, as it did on January 17, 1991, when it was opened for the people of that west Baghdad middle-class suburb to take refuge in, specially at night when the American warplanes struck.

But inside, its vast pillar-held hall was all charred, and the smell of death had not left it even after two years.

On the burnt walls hung photographs of those incenerated in it, family-by-family: nine children of Ghada Qassim, nine family members of Eaman Naif Ahmed, six of Balkis Hassani, six of Nawar

The author, a veteran journalist, was recently in Baghdad. He presents his impressions on his return from Iraq.

Judi, six of Yahya Mohammed Mushed, five of Hamidiye Abid, and so on.

On that fateful day when the missile tore through the seemingly impenetrable roof at four in the morning when all were asleep, it was the birthday of Aiman Naef Ahmed, and the new white dress she did not get to wear, formed the centrepiece of her martyred family's photographs.

Surviving family members sobbed as they lit candles on the ground under the photographs, and the sobs grew into a wail as they came out of the burnt hall to sit under a canopy put up for the memorial service.

The canopy had been put up because it had started raining and grew cold. Even the sky seemed unable to hold its tears for the massacred innocents.

A spokesman of the American forces in the Gulf had described the air strike as a "pinpoint bombing of a military target". But when you looked up at the hole blasted through the concrete roof, shredding its reinforcing iron bars, you wondered if a large locomotive had come crashing through it. It was certainly not a pin that had fallen through.

Then there was the deep, four-metre-radius crater on the shelter floor.

No pinpoint ever took so many lives, or wrecked such devastation.

The American satellites and planes bombing Baghdad for a whole month by then must certainly have seen women in their colourful clothes going in and coming out of the shelter daily. How could they have taken it for a military target? For that matter how could they, the schools, hospitals, markets, museums, power houses and water purification and sewage disposal plants that they bombed?

Why this destruction of civilian targets? It was to torture the Iraqi society and break its will and convince it that America and its allies had the power to inflict pain on it when and where, and in the amount, they wanted.

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HOW do the Iraqi people look at the Gulf war and its consequences? One has already read a lot about what the Western allies have said about it.

Even in the midst of the misery brought upon them by the war, the Iraqi people still say they were not defeated.

That was no war, they say. The Western allies bombed us from 30 kilometres up in the sky where our anti-aircraft guns could not reach. It was no act of courage to drop bombs on the people from that safe height. You did not have to be a soldier to push a button to unload bombs.

The ground war too was no war, they say. There were bombs in front and behind us, and we could not move, it was a coward's way of fighting.

Thirtyone countries attacked us and tried to destroy our country. But we are still here. We did not change. The war changed nothing in our country. That is why we say we did not lose the war.

The Iraqis hold this view because they believe in the old values or myth that war is a contest of courage, and loyalty to a cause. That war has an element of fairness in it, and that it is a rough way of measuring the relative merit of two causes.

They do not consider it an act of great bravery to advance on an army that was starving and bleeding from the ears and throwing down its weapons. It was no virtue to massacre it when it was in full retreat, after being ordered to cease fighting and withdraw.

That they think is the behaviour of the hyena and the jackal, and not that of a lion.

The Americans wanted to prove that they had got out of the "post-Vietnam syndrome", and that they had the grit to fight big wars again. So, while some Americans may have convinced themselves of the great military virtue of their troops, they have not convinced the Iraqis, particularly the Iraqi soldiers.

The Iraqi people know the hardships their soldiers endured under constant bombardment for a whole month, unlike the American air warriors who waged the war by pushing buttons. It is in this contest of courage that they refuse to accept that they lost.

The Iraqis say that the US used fuel-air bombs, which kill by burning up all the oxygen, on their troops dug down in tunnels.

The Western media had created the fear that the Iraqis might use chemical weapons. But they did not. It were the Americans who used the fuel-air bomb, and killed Iraqi soldiers by burning up the oxygen and thus poisoning the atmosphere.

The Western media also said that the Iraqis might use biological weapons. But they did not. It was the US and its allies which bombed water purification and sewage disposal plants. This, according to the Red Crescent (Arab equivalent of the Red Cross) officials, was a form of biological warfare, because it killed people by means of disease. Many died due to the contamination of drinking water and some are dying still because of it.

The world trembled at the thought of Iraq using nuclear weapons. But it was the US which actually bombed the Iraqi nuclear installations, creating a serious danger of radiation leaks.

The Americans used radioactive artillery shells, the spent rounds of which may be causing fatal illnesses, including cancer, in Iraq.

Because of the war and the embargo, the death-rate of children under five had tripled in the first eight months of 1991, killing 50,000 of them.

Known as depleted uranium penetraters, when fired the core of the shell bursts into a searing flame that helps it pierce the armour of tanks and other military vehicles.

During the six weeks of war, the US and allied forces fired over 10,000 such shells, dispersing, according to Western sources themselves, at least 40 tons of depleted uranium in Iraq and Kuwait.

After firing, the broken shells release uranium particles in the air, which enter the body easily and deposit in bones, organs and cells.

Besides being radioactive, uranium is chemically toxic, like lead, and can damage the kidneys and lungs.

All the horrible things the media said Iraq might do, were done by the US.

The first rules of justice were made out in Iraq. The 4000-year-old code of Hammurabi says, one can take a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye.

It means, for the loss of a tooth, one may not take more than a tooth, for an eye, no more than an eye.

Had the Western allies applied this ancient crude formula to their assault on Iraq, thousands of lives would have been saved.

For all its humanistic talk, the United Nations is not able to raise itself to the moral level of this ancient code of Hammurabi.

The Iraqis ask: "They have got what they wanted. They got Kuwait back. What more do they want? To starve the Iraqi people and deny them medicine?"

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ON the surface, Baghdad looks the same as before the war: its streets are choked with cars, shops are full of food, clothing and consumer goods; chicken and lamb roast in the windows of small restaurants; expensive hotels are packed with honeymooning couples and well-dressed people walk about in the city centre.

It does not look like the capital of a country "bombed back to stone age", as a UN report described it two years ago.

But as one walks around some more, one runs into the misery that the two-and-a-half years of sanctions and embargo have imposed upon it. Then one sees things that one has never seen in Baghdad before: flea markets everywhere, where people sell their household things: dishes, pots and pans, clothing, shoes, tools, appliances, furniture, etc. to buy food.

Listless women sit on the steps of underground subway crossings begging. Malnourished children sell tiny bags of peanuts and single cigarettes.

Thieves markets have come up to sell stolen and other goods, after a sharp increase in thefts and burglaries. People are afraid to travel at night for fear of being held up and robbed.

Hospitals are empty because there is no medicine. Drinking water is still polluted because there is no chlorine to treat it.

Baghdad, as I knew it during the past 13 years, was not a city crowded with beggars, hawkers and pickpockets. It was the capital of a welfare state. The government used to import wheat at 1000 Iraqi dinars a ton and sell it to its people at 170 dinars. Medicine was similarly highly subsidised. Hospitals were free for all. Using its annual oil income of $17 billion, the government provided a relatively high minimum standard of living to its 17 million people. There was a minimum wage, unemployment insurance, an effective social security system, and fixed prices for essential goods.

The government also used its oil revenue to provide the country with advanced technological and industrial infrastructure.

Its streets were safe and society generally prosperous. Malnutrition was totally unknown for the past 30-40 years.

The embargo has destroyed all that. Its only result has been that the poor are being driven to starvation, and the rich, as they always do in similar conditions, find new ways of making more money. In Iraq it is the blackmarket for imported goods that the embargo has created.

As for daily necessities, the price of wheatflour has shot up by 4146 per cent, and that of rice by 2260. Baby-milk now costs 3000 per cent more, at thirty dinars a tin. (The market rate now is one dinar to a rupee.)

Wages have gone up to about 200 dinars a month, after a 40 per cent increase. But the prices have risen by several thousand per cent.

Before the war, the dinar was officially 3.20 dollars, and half a dollar in the blackmarket. Now it is thirty to the dollar. Then the minimum monthly wage of 120 dinars equalled $ 360. Now the increased salary of 200 dinars is worth less than seven dollars.

It is the rationing system that keeps people alive. Every month each person gets eight kilograms of wheat, at 115 fils (1000 fils make a dinar), which comes to about 11 paise a kilogram. The open market price of it is five dinars or five rupees. Also, everyone, from a new-born baby onwards, gets every month 1.5 kilograms of rice, at 325 fils a kilo (market 10 dinars), one kilogram of sugar at 280 fils (market 10 dinars), 50 grams of tea at one dinar a kilo (market 30 dinars), three-fourths of a kilogram of cooking oil at 375 fils (market 15 dinars), 200 grams of washing soap-powder at 150 fils (market, one dinar), one kilogram of salt at 250 fils, five matchboxes at ten fils each, one shaving blade at 20 fils (market seven-and-a-half dinars), and one and a quarter cakes of bath-soap at 120 fils a piece (market seven to ten dinars).

There are no meat, chicken, eggs or milk products in the ration. A kilogram of mutton is now 75 dinars (before the war it was 1.5 dinars). With all of one's monthly salary one cannot buy even three kilos of it.

The ration lasts about 20 days. For the remaining days one has to go to the market, which fewer and fewer people are able to afford now.

The bombing and embargo has turned self-sufficient Iraq into a country of dependency. It cannot buy food, medicine and spare-parts because it is not allowed to sell its oil. The US, Britain and France want the United Nations to control its oil sales, so that it can collect war reparations from that money. But Iraq is not prepared to place its oil wealth in the hands of the UN and the nations that control it.

A disaster is being deliberately created in Iraq. It can be ended at any moment, by allowing it to sell its oil.

The lesson George Bush wanted to teach Iraq was that a country may be rich and possess sophisticated technology and skilled labour force, but the powerful Western nations will still have the power to drive it back to a state of dependency and make it a poor country of the Third World.

This was his new world order. ■

ARUN GHOSH: Public Sector Squeeze

(Continued from page 6)

Committee now gains credibility by daring to criticise the IMF. What better evidence do we need, if any were needed, to establish the sound judgement of the Committee? What is forgotten in the process are the criteria laid down for the valuation of the equity of the PSEs, namely, the expected cash flow. If one were to adopt the same criteria for the valuation of share prices on the Bombay Stock Exchange, the latter would come tumbling down to perhaps one-third of their present (depressed) level! But then, what is sauce for the gander is not necessarily sauce for the goose.

The manner of functioning of the government has of late been secretive to say the least. The government has also been adept at pre-empting action, and not taking the country into confidence in regard to major new policy initiatives. Time and again, Parliament has been bypassed. And, judging from past experience, the moment the Budget session of Parliament is over, the government would announce the acceptance, in principle, of the recommendations of the Rangarajan panel. The assets of the public enterprises, built up assiduously over the past forty years, would get liquidated over the space of a few years. That would complete the destruction of all vestiges of a planned economy. Why plan? Has not the history of the USSR proved that central planning is of no avail? Never mind that the mightiest of the private sector—the TISCO, to take only the latest example—has been seen to be like the emperor without any clothes. "We must overcome," said the Finance Minister sometime back. We must overcome all resistance to the establishment of a free market economy, in a country where income inequalities are distressingly evident in overt starvation deaths (the weavers in Andhra Pradesh last year and of tribals in Orissa lately, being only two examples).

It is amazing that such policies can get implemented by a minority government. It is a paradox that the party in power is the Congress party, the election manifesto of which would be a very far cry from all that is happening today. But then, once you get under the thumb of international finance capital, you may reasonably expect such things to happen. The only thing that history teaches us is that history teaches us nothing.

When Narasimha Rao announces loudly that the present economic policies are irreversible, he is both wrong, and in a way also right. One should qualify the statement; the *policies are reversible*. What is not reversible is the act of sell-out of the public sector which the present government is intent on pushing through in great haste. Once these assets are liquidated, the act of liquidation of the public sector would be irreversible. ■

Marx and Lenin in the Light of Our Experience

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV

On the occasion of the birth anniversaries of Karl Marx (May 5) and Vladimir Lenin (April 22) we are carrying the following excerpts from an article written by the former Soviet President ("The Socialist Idea and Perestroika*") in* Pravda *(November 26, 1989). The relevance and significance of these excerpts in the present situation cannot be overestimated.* —Editor

The founders of Marxism never invented specific forms and mechanisms for the development of new society. They elaborated the socialist idea, relying on the realities of society and the practice of the revolutionary labour movement of their time. In a bid to arm revolutionary social forces with a theoretically substantiated strategy in the fight for socialism, they proved that capitalism was historically temporary and transition to a new stage of social development was a historical necessity. They provided merely a general theoretical idea of the trends of social development, which is a reliable guideline in understanding and transforming social practice. As for the structure of future society which was to replace capitalism, they discussed it in most general terms and mostly from the point of view of its fundamental principles.

We can say today that Marx underestimated the ability of capitalism to develop. Capitalism managed to assimilate the advances of science and technology to form such socio-economic structures that assured its viability and created a relatively high level of well-being for the majority of population in industrialised countries, which, however, by no means renders null and void its deep inner contradictions.

Although Marx was the first to see huge development potential in scientific and technological progress, with science turning into a direct productive and social force, he failed to foresee that the coming scientific and technological revolution could become a new source for the development of capitalism. This is easy to understand because Marx predicted only options for the development of the capitalism of the nineteenth century, the only capitalism he knew. He did not expect that there might be a long period of the coexistence of two social systems in large groups of countries, which prompted capitalism to improve itself, absorb many of the elements of socialist experience in the socio-economic sphere and democratise the political system. All combined, this enabled capitalism to gain additional strength and adjust itself to the challenges of the time.

It is important that Marxism views socialism as a natural result of progress of civilisation and a product of the people's creative endeavour. This reflects the scientific essence of Marxism in substantiating the new society. Retaining the same approach, it is important to remember that it has not been given us once and for all.

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NO revolution goes strictly according to plan and no revolution produces exactly the results which were expected by its participants. This is confirmed by the entire experience of mankind. This fully applies to the socialist revolution, too, which was repeatedly stressed by the classics of Marxism. "Preset opinions regarding details of the organisation of future society? You won't find even a hint of them in our works,"[1] Engels said in a *Le Figaro* interview in 1893. Lenin wrote about achieving the system applying the rule "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs". "By what stages, by means of what practical measures humanity will proceed to this supreme aim we do not and cannot know."[2] This was said after the February revolution, on the eve of the October uprising, in the book *The State and Revolution* which contains the most detailed of all the descriptions of the socialist future which he allowed himself before the socialist revolution got under way.

Yes, our past defies a simple, straightforward interpretation. It is a fusion of victories and setbacks, discoveries and mistakes, the bright and the tragic, revolutionary enthusiasm, heroic work and sacrifices, great hopes and disappointments. We cannot discard our history. It is in the past that many of our problems of today are buried. The entire experience of socialism, both heroic and tragic, is the heritage of the whole of mankind. All of it must be thoroughly studied and thought over. In this case, neither our victories nor our defeats will be in vain, and we will understand better the dangers awaiting us and ways of avoiding them.

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THE years immediately after the October Revolution became the first practical test for the socialist idea. An intensive search began for concrete forms of the organisation of society. This is illustrated by Lenin's works, starting from his well-known article "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government". Under the influence of the dogmatic interpretations fostered by Stalin, which outlived him by many years, the exploratory character of Lenin's post-revolutionary works was underestimated, and the changes in his views on the construction of socialism were glossed over, because those changes could supposedly be interpreted as a sign of weakness. But Lenin's quest was a sign of strength, not weakness. In the thick of things, amid violent cataclysms, Lenin still managed to draw certain lessons, to sense the needs of the masses, to compare facts and draw theoretical conclusions from the processes unfolding in society.

It is known that in the first years of the revolution, the accent was placed on direct distribution, mandatory work and strict accounting and control, measures which became organic elements in the policy of war communism. With the end of the Civil War, Lenin realised, however, that that policy had outlived its usefulness. He realised that it was impossible to lead the masses to socialism by relying solely on the enthusiasm born of the revolution, that it was imperative to activate material incentives and the related economic mechanisms of commodity production and circulation. Proceeding from this, new main directions for the advance of society were outlined, central among which was the bold declaration of the NEP, the New Economic Policy, which clashed with dogmatic ideas and with the prevailing opinion in the Party.

No less dramatic is the following problem. During the preparations for the October Revolution and in the course of it, the Bolsheviks led by Lenin hoped for support from the proletariat of the more developed countries, for they understood that Russia had not reached the level of economic development required for the transition to socialism. By the end of the Civil War, however, no proletarian revolutions had won in other countries. Does this mean that the Bolsheviks should not have seized power in October or that they should have relinquished it after the Civil War? Lenin gave a clear answer to this question: we must use the power of the proletariat to speed up the creation of economic and cultural preconditions, that is, modern industry and revolution in culture, for the transition to socialism. In other words, the task was to do exactly what capitalism and bourgeois democracy were supposed to achieve, but to do it under a Soviet Government.

By the end of his life, Lenin drew tentative outlines of his cooperative plan and closely linked the idea of cultural revolution with co-operative movement of small producers and with the improvement of all living conditions. Lenin was thus developing his programme of the transition to socialism, which resulted in what he clearly admitted was a "radical modification of our whole outlook on socialism".[3]

An analysis of Lenin's entire post-revolution works makes clear the direction of the change he planned. This can probably be best illustrated by the article "On Cooperation" which is the source of the above quotation. From the idea of "unified factory", a kind of monopoly run by the workers' state, which was often repeated in 1917 and 1918, he went over to the idea that "the system of civilised cooperators is the system of socialism".

Lenin was denied time to work out ways and organisational and other social forms of accomplishing all this. He just made tentative outlines and suggested approaches to this task. Unfortunately, they too were eventually ignored or crudely distorted in the course of Stalin's industrialisation and collectivisation.

Stalin's distortions led to the loss of the most important thing about Marx's and Lenin's concept of socialism: viewing man as the end, not the means. Instead of the idea of free development of everyone as a condition for free development of all, a notion emerged where a person was seen as a "cog" in the party-and-government wheel and mass organisations as the "drive belts" of the machine. In subsequent years, this mechanism remained essentially unchanged. Moreover, the bureaucratic administrative system was actually gaining in force, with very negative consequences for society which was eventually plunged into a state of stagnation and placed on the verge of a crisis.

Marxist theory foresaw the possibility that in the course of the construction of a new society, all would have to be started from scratch more than once. ■

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Abandoned without Relief or Compensation

Plight of the Bhopal Gas Victims

N.D. JAYAPRAKASH

The victims of the world's biggest industrial disaster—the Bhopal gas leak disaster of December 2-3, 1984—continue to suffer in various ways. The leakage of 40 tons of lethal MIC (Methyl Isocyanate, an ultra hazardous chemical) from the Union Carbide Corporation (UCC)'s pesticide factory had compelled the vast majority of the 850,000 inhabitants of Bhopal to go through a nightmarish experience. The toxic fumes killed several thousands and injured hundreds of thousands in varying degrees. Way back in February 1989, the Government of India—with the sanction of the Supreme Court—reached a questionable settlement with the UCC behind the backs of the victims on the plea that there was a pressing urgency to provide immediate and substantial relief to the victims. However, while the prime accused have managed to escape from the jurisdiction of the Indian courts (or so it appears), justice continues to elude the gas victims who are left without interim relief or final compensation.

Unjust Settlement

It may be recalled that on February 14-15, 1989 the Supreme Court of India ordered the Bhopal settlement for a paltry sum of 470 million US dollars (Rs 700 crores at the then prevailing rate of exchange). This sum was just 15 per cent of the initial claim of $3000 million made by the Government of India on behalf of the victims. The humiliating terms of the settlement also granted the prime accused in the Bhopal case immunity from criminal prosecution. The unjust settlement was immediately challenged by the victim groups and other concerned citizens.

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On October 3, 1991, on the eve of the scheduled visit of the then US Trade Representative, Ms Carla Hills, to this country, the Supreme Court once again upheld the validity of the settlement amount but revoked the immunity from criminal prosecution granted to the accused. The Court also directed the Government of India to set up by February 3, 1992 at least 40 Claim Courts in accordance with the Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster (Registration & Processing of Claims) Scheme, 1985.

But according to the official records, only five Claim Courts were opened in February 1992, 13 more in July 1992 and another 12 in January 1993. Till January 3, 1993 only 1710 cases (out of a total of over 600,000 claims, including 14,000 claims on account of death) were decided upon in the 30 claim courts. Meanwhile, the payment of interim relief to over 500,000 victims, which was going on for the last three years, ceased from April 1993. Thus, the vast majority of the gas victims are facing extreme hardship with neither interim relief nor final compensation.

It was loudly proclaimed that it was to provide immediate relief to the victims that the settlement in February 1989 was hastily concluded. But, while the victims who are in acute need of immediate relief have been left in a state of helplessness, even the absurdly truncated settlement sum lying in the custody of the Supreme Court remains largely unutilised. Given the tardy pace of adjudication of claims, should not a simpler and speedier method be evolved to disburse the compensation? Is it not a fair demand that interim relief to the gas victims be continued until their claims are adjudicated?

Petition to Government

Seized of the problems facing the gas victims, the Bhopal Gas Peedith Mahila Udyog Sangathan (BGPMUS), the Bhopal Group For Information And Action (BGIA), and the Bhopal Gas Peedith Sangharsh Sahayog Samiti (BGPSSS) petitioned the Government of India for immediate action. Several Members of Parliament were also contacted in this regard. As a result three MPs—Dr Malini Bhattacharya, Hannan Mollah and Sudish Pachouri, met with the Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilisers, Eduardo Faleiro, on March 18, 1993 to discuss the petitions. Also present were the Welfare Commissioner of Bhopal, Justice A.G. Quereshi, and other officials from the Ministry. The petitions submitted by BGPMUS, BGIA and BGPSSS pertained to five issues of utmost concern to the victims: (1) interim relief; (2) economic rehabilitation; (3) final compensation; (4) medical research; (5) criminal case.

Interim Relief

As a result of intense lobbying by the victim groups, the Government of India had on March 5, 1990 allocated a sum of Rs 360 crores as interim relief for the Bhopal gas victims. For the first time, after 63 months of the disaster, the victims were able to obtain some sustained relief. Each resident present on the night of December 2-3, 1984 in the 36 wards of Bhopal—declared as gas-affected by the government—was to be paid Rs 200 per month for the next three years. Interim relief, which was to benefit 500,000 victims, was to be adjusted against their final compensation.

The three-year interim relief order implied, on the one hand, that claims for compensation filed by gas victims would be adjudicated within this time span. While, on the other hand, during the interim period such relief would spare the victims any economic hardship which they would have had to otherwise endure. Unfortunately for the victims, the provision of interim relief has ceased even before the proceedings for settling their claims could begin.

While the last installment of interim relief was paid in March 1993, the process of adjudication of claims has been extremely slow. At the rate at which it is progressing it will take several years for the 600,000 odd claims to be settled. Therefore, in order to mitigate the hardship the victims may face until their claims are amicably settled, the demand was made of the government that it continue to pay interim relief like it did during the last three years.

No Burden

However, the government may not have to mobilise additional resources for continuing interim relief. There was an alternate suggestion. It was pointed out that the settlement sum of 470 million US dollars paid by Union Carbide Corporation in March 1989, now amounts to over Rs 2000 crores (at the current exchange rate) and generates interest of around Rs 200 crores per annum. The total amount that is required to pay interim relief to the victims annually (which is abour Rs 140 crores) could easily come out of the interest that is accruing on the settlement sum. The task of continuing interim relief need not, therefore, become a financial burden on the government.

Economic Rehabilitation

It was also pointed out that the government had set up a special industrial area for the economic rehabilitation of the gas victims. About 170 industrial sheds were constructed to provide jobs to 10,000 gas victims. However, due to bureaucratic apathy and lack of political will these sheds are lying idle since their construction two years back. What is most shocking is that two sewing centres, which had employed 2300 women for the last five years, were summarily closed down, thereby depriving these women of the meagre sum of Rs 300 they were earning every month.

Despite several representations, the government has not taken any step regarding economic rehabilitation of the gas victims. The demand, therefore, was that the government immediately reopen the sewing centres and provide additional jobs by setting up appropriate industries in the industrial area earmarked for gas victims. (Many of the gas victims,whose physical constitution has considerably weakened, are incapable of doing heavy work.)

Final Compensation

In the claim courts where poor victims have to plead their case themselves, compensation has unjustly been denied in 1152 cases or almost 70 per cent of the 1710 cases adjudicated so far. While in the 558 cases where compensation has been awarded, the amounts have been miserably low. Another disturbing fact is that the quantum of compensation is being determined only according to the wages lost due to death or injury. No account has been taken of compensations for lasting psychological effects or collateral effects on family members. Furthermore, there is no systematic provision for paying interest or making up for losses due to inflation. Charges of corruption are also rife.

Therefore, a through re-examination of the functioning of the Claim Courts—including provision of free legal aid to the claimants—was necessary. Also given the tardy pace of compensation disbursement, it was hoped that at least now the government would actively consider the alternate scheme proposed by the victim groups.

Alternate Scheme

The alternate scheme envisages the allocation of a fixed sum of money to every resident present on the night of December 2-3, 1984 in the 36 gas affected wards of Bhopal. This would ensure a basic minimum of compensation to all gas victims. The underlining assumption is that all those who were present in the gas affected areas must have inhaled a significant amount of the toxic gases. The difference in impact would only vary according to intensity and duration of exposure, age and general physical condition of the victim, quality of immediate and post-exposure medical care, etc. Therefore, anyone who was exposed to the toxic fumes is by definition a gas victim. Every exposed person is thus entitled to at least a basic minimum amount of compensation.

The amount each victim is entitled to can be directly transferred into his/her separate individual bank account which the government had opened specially for disbursement of interim relief. It is a step which would almost eliminate the scope for middlemen to indulge in malpractices. Not only would such a process ensure speedy disbursement of a basic minimum amount of compensation to all gas victims but also obviate the need for the relatively mildly affected victims to appear before Claim Courts. This would greatly reduce the number of cases the claim courts will have to deal with. Only cases of claimants who have suffered moderate and severe injuries would then be brought before the Claim Courts.

Even these cases can be speedily disposed off after suitably modifying the tedious and time-consuming procedures which the Claim Courts now follow. What is required are clear guidelines for decision on exposure related claims, which is absent at present. The judges of the Claim Courts have been denied access to research findings on the toxic effects of the gases in question and are thus forced to adjudicate cases in the absence of such knowledge. Of course, the will to settle cases expeditiously and judiciously are also equally important.

Medical Research

It is reliably learnt that the government has discontinued 24 of the 26 studies on the effects of the toxic gases on the the life systems of Bhopal. If the government has indeed moved in that direction, it is a highly deplorable step. The demand was, therefore, emphatically made that the government desist from any attempt to discontinue research on the effects of the toxic gases. Instead it must allocate additional resources to intensify such research in order to unravel all the ramifications of the Bhopal disaster.

The government was also asked to make public the results of all studies carried out by the Indian Council of Medical Research and other agencies on the effects of the toxic gases. Lack of access to such information, on the one hand, denied the gas victims a source of vital evidence which could strengthen their claims for adequate compensation. On the other hand, the judges of the Claim Courts, who are totally unaware of the medical consequences of the toxic gases, cannot be expected to give fair judgments in the absence of adequate information on the nature of the injuries sustained by the gas victims.

Criminal Case

The Central Bureau of Investigations (CBI), which was investigating the criminal case, was debarred from probing the case any further after the settlement order of Febuary 14-15, 1989 had granted the UCC immunity from criminal prosecution. The Court finally revoked the immunity on October 3, 1991 and the probe has begun afresh. However, even 97 months after the disaster, a study to compare the designs and safety systems of the two pesticide plants of the UCC—the one in Bhopal (now closed) with its counterpart in Institute, West Virginia, USA—has not been undertaken as yet! Such a comparative study would conclusively establish whether or not the UCC had adopted double standards while installing safety systems at its Bhopal plant. There was an urgent need to forthrightly settle the issue of corporate liability.

The government had also not begun extradition proceedings against the then UCC Chief, Warren Anderson, against whom a non-bailable warrant of arrest, issued by the Bhopal District Court, has been pending since March 27, 1992. Other officials of the UCC have also been declared proclaimed offenders by the same Court. Therefore, it was demanded of the government that it take firm steps to seek extradition of Warren Anderson and other accused from the United States of America. All those responsible for the Bhopal gas disaster must be made to stand trial and the guilty prosecuted. (The only positive development so far is that the Bhopal Sessions Court has finally on April 8, 1993 framed charges against nine Indian officials of the Union Carbide India Ltd. accused in the case.)

The demand was also made to immediately facilitate the visit of a CBI team to the USA to carry out inspection of the design and safety systems of the UCC's pesticide plant at Institute, West Virginia. If the UCC is found guilty of applying double standards, punitive fines must be levied on the company. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the UCC's assets are not allowed to be liquidated. The UCC must be compelled to maintain at least $3000 million worth of unencumbered assets (which it did from 1986 until the time of the settlement in 1989) during the pendency of the criminal suit.

Need for Interaction

One of the basic problems is that the government refuses to take the victim groups into confidence. It is yet not too late for the government to change its attitude. It was, therefore, urged that meetings be held of all concerned—representatives of the victim groups, Central and State Governments, scientists and lawyers involved with the case—to tackle these problems in right earnest and in the best interests of the Bhopal gas victims and of the people of the developing world at large.

Government's Response

While the Minister, Eduardo Faleiro, agreed that the demand to continue interim relief was quite justified, he expressed the government's inability to make any fresh allocation for such relief because of the severe resource crunch. As to the suggestion of utilising the interest accruing on the settlement sum for the same, the response was that the said amount was not in the control of the government and only the Supreme Court could give the necessary direction in the matter. The Minister, of course, said that he would place the suggestion before the Cabinet and then move the Supreme Court for suitable action.

On the question of rehabilitation, Faleiro said he would have the sewing centres, closed down by the previous State Government in June 1992, reopened at the earliest. But beyond that he made no specific commitment. Regarding the alternate plan for speeding up compensation disbursement, the Minister wanted to seek expert legal opinion, because the quasi-judicial process for finalising claims had already been set in motion. Therefore, it was suggested that representatives of victim-groups, Central and State Governments, and the lawyers involved with the Bhopal case meet and evolve an appropriate strategy. Such a meeting was expected to cover other related matters as well. The meeting thus ended without touching upon the most contentious issues: the discontinuance of medical research; extradition of Warren Anderson and other accused from the United States; and inspection of the design and safety systems of the UCC's pesticide plant at Institute, West Virginia, USA.

The MPs who were at the meeting had said they would persuade Parliament to send an all-party parliamentary delegation to Bhopal to make a first hand report on the problems facing the gas victims. This proposal is now being concretised. However, no steps have so far been initiated by the government to meet the pressing demands of the gas victims.

The Bhopal gas tragedy is certainly an issue of national concern and political differences need not stand in the way of relief, rehabilitation, compensation disbursement, medical research, criminal prosecution and other related matters. It would be a matter of national shame if the nation continues to remain indifferent to the tragic plight of the Bhopal gas victims. It is hoped that all concerned people from all walks of life would again come forward to speak up for the gas victims. ■

COMMUNICATION

Thanking Friends of Mazhar

Through your weekly magazine, I would like to thank all friends who remembered Mazhar. All of them knew him better and longer than I did. It was very interesting for me to know certain aspects of Mazhar's life which took place before we were married.

It is difficult for me to write about Mazhar, it is not easy to describe my feelings before the public, my emotions are so sharp as yet that pouring out my heart would be emotionally difficult, but I am very grateful to all our friends who spoke about him with genuine affection and respect.

As Jawaharlal Nehru said,

> Try to think out things for yourself and build your thoughts on an integral and integrated mind. There is nothing so important as integrity of thought which is not swept away by momentary gusts, or rumour or hearsay. If we can keep that hard gem-like flame of mental integrity, our actions are coloured by it and we grow in the process. Else we remain petty, inconsequential and unimportant in any real analysis.

This is how Mazhar lived, this is what he taught his family and this is how we will continue living.

Tahira Mazhar

3-Shah Jamal Street No. 3, Lahore-16
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TRIBUTE

M.K. Ramamurthi

RAJU RAMACHANDRAN

In *How to be God* George Mikes, commenting on barristers kowtowing to judges, says

> ....the barristers' constant braying of 'As Your Lordship Pleases' reflects total submission to a divine lordship

and that

> You cannot blame judges if they start believing in their own divinity. Indeed, I admire quite a few of them who have remained almost human, and I know at least one who is still decidedly modest.

M.K. Ramamurthi was one counsel who refused to acknowledge or foster any notions of judicial divinity: on principle, he never ever said: "My Lord" (in fact, as an atheist, he did not recognise any kind of divinity). This reluctance of his led to some very awkward forms of address, and one bewildered judge asked: "Why must you keep referring to me in the third person?"

Freedom fighter, journalist, trade-unionist and senior advocate of the Supreme Court: it was an action-packed life of 67 years. A life of struggle and sacrifice. And a life lived with courage and intellectual honesty.

Ramamurthi and R.K. Garg, alongwith Mohan Kumaramangalam, A.S.R. Chari and Krishna Menon were the leaders of the Left-wing of the legal profession. The labour and service jurisprudence built up by the Supreme Court over the years bears the imprint of the vigorous advocacy of Ramamurthi. For workmen and trade unions, he was the most obvious choice. Unlike many former trade-unionists, he never once accepted a case on behalf of the management. In the later years of his practice he gave freely of his time to legal aid and public interest litigation as well.

Practitioners of respectful advocacy (the present writer included) have often wondered why lawyers like Ramamurthi and Garg were strident. The answer is perhaps to be found in the context of the times in which they started practice in the Supreme Court: in a Court dominated by the likes of Setalvad, Daphtary and Viswanatha Sastri, a youngster could not afford to be meek.

Despite being one of the seniormost lawyers in the country, he kept his fees low, and no litigant was deprived of his services for want of capacity to pay. His lack of greed, his professional integrity and his depth of study hold a lesson or two for the current stars. Yesterday's rebel is a model for today.

In a world where hypocrisy reigns, it is the discreet that get away. But Ramamurthi was open about his choices, and squarely faced their consequences. His dreadful temper concealed the heart of a child. His laughter was infectious, and he often took a dig at himself.

The battle with cancer was fought with the same courage with which he lived his life. The deadly disease spread, but he argued cases in court till almost the very end.

The working classes, the underprivileged and the secular forces have lost a friend. Rest in Peace, Great Nonconformist: we shall never see the likes of you again. ■

LIMAYE : Judicial Aggrandisement

(Continued from page 4)

was not allowed to be tested on the floor of the House "on par with the present case"? They could have doggedly stuck to their old line. *But on the basis of the facts of the present case, on the basis of all that happened on December 6 and after, it became impossible not to justify the action of the Central Government in dismissing these State Governments.* He was not going by the reports of the Governors. They were "not convincing".

Then Indrajit Gupta went on to marshall the evidence of public statements and actions of Chief Ministers Sunder Lal Patwa and Kalyan Singh. There was total anarchy and chaos in Faizabad District. The BJP Governments could never be expected to implement the ban on the RSS-VHP-Bajrang Dal. Why should they, when they belonged to these organisations? Indrajit Gupta highlighted the Centre's failure to discharge its responsibility and own up the moral responsibility for this failure. *They were supporting these proclamations because this was an extraordinary case and he was sure that this was not going to be allowed to be repeated over and over again.* (*Ibid.*, columns 11058-59)

When the resolutions were put to vote they were adopted by voice vote, the BJP having walked out of the House. It is curious that while the Janata Dal in Parliament supported the imposition of President's Rule, some leaders opposed it outside. Among them were Madhu Dandavate and George Fernandes.

◆

HAVING considered the debate in the Lok Sabha we now turn to the judgment of the MP High Court. The first impression is that it is an ill-crafted, shoddy decision. The majority judgement made great play of the fact that the clause ousting judicial review under 356 has been amended. It contended that the 44th Amendment has enlarged the scope of judicial scrutiny of Presidential satisfaction. *It has done no such thing.* The argument that the Presidential proclamation is *now* wide open to judicial review is unsustainable. Insertion of superfluous amendments or their repeal can have no effect.

It was always held that the advice of the Cabinet under Article 74 was binding on the President. This was reaffirmed in the debate raised by President Rajendra Prasad. Motilal Setalvad and Alladi Krishnaswami Aiyer effectively demolished Presidential pretentions. Yet Indira Gandhi, fearing a presidential *coup d'etat,* added a proviso by way of abundant caution stating this obvious truth and Morarji Desai, also out of distrust of the President, retained this unnecessary clause with only slight modification. Can anybody contend that if these provisons inserted by 42nd and 44th amendments were deleted, the Cabinet's advice would cease to be binding? The suggestion is fantastic. Let us take a contrary example.

Article 368(4) and Tenth Schedule ousted the power of judical review under 42nd and 52nd Amendments. But did that prevent the Supreme Court from assuming the power of judicial review? In the *Minerva Case* the Court struck down a clause—which prohibited judicial interference—inserted by the 42nd Amendment Act.

The attempts to subject Article 356 to Article 355 or 365 is quite ridiculous. The scheme of Article 356 is independent and complete, and the exercise of power under it is not controlled by other Articles in the Chapter on Emergency. And yet the Chief Justice said:

> Incapacity or helplessness of a State to meet a threat to public order or peace is not a permissible ground unless it results in non-functioning of the government in the State. In fact, Article 355 of the Constitution enjoins upon the Union to help the State in maintaining its government. That duty is not to be discharged only by proclaiming the Presidential rule.

If Courts throw caution and judicial restraint to the winds and launch out on a reckless course of interventionism, no mere wording of a constitutional clause is going to deter the judges form aggrandising themselves.

It might be recalled that one Supreme Court judge had advanced the absurd claim that the Supreme Court has even the right to sit in judgment over impeachment by Parliament. The day the Supreme Court attempts to do it would sound the deathknell of the judiciary.

◆

THE grounds disclosed in the Governor's report do not have to be exhaustive. Nor have they to be adequate to the subjective satisfaction of the judges. There might be other information in the possession of the Cabinet. The challenge to the Proclamation must fail if it is established that the facts disclosed in the Governor's report or the information in the possession of Central Government are not extraneous. If a reasonable nexus is established, the proclamation will have to be sustained. On the basis of the reasoning of the MP High Court the dismissal of the nine governments in 1977 would have been quashed. Yet they had upheld it only on the basis of an apprehension by the Centre that the law and order situation in these States was likely to deteriorate! What is surprising is that the MP judgment invents new and imprecise conditions precedent such as existence of "material and warranted" grounds. It refers to debates and commentaries, but does not mention the Lok Sabha debate relating to the December 1992 proclamations because it would have been damaging to its reasoning.

The political evaluation of the situation was left to the President and not to the judges under Article 356. In effect the MP High Court went into the adequacy or otherwise of the material produced before it. It mentions the irrelevant entry in List I of the Seventh Schedule about the employment of Central forces of the Union in aid of its civil power. Did not the Chief Justice know that the BJP's UP Chief Minister had protested against the Centre's deployment of Central forces in UP and that he had not allowed them to move into the vicinity of the Babri mosque on December 6, 1992?

S.K. Jha (CJ) is not above playing politics; he has taken umbrage at the dismissal of only the BJP Governments. He forgets that it was the BJP which organised the demolition of the Babri structure and it was the *Sangh Parivar* and its ally which played an active role in the Surat, Ahmedabad and Bombay riots, alongwith the Muslim extremists. I ask: are these matters fit for judicial adjudication?

The power of judicial review ought to have preservation of the constitutional order as its object, not encouragement of its wanton disruption.

The judgement of Jha (CJ) makes the shocking statement that in voting on the proclamations the Parliament does not sit in judgment over the Central Government's action. It does. *If the resolution seeking its approval is defeated in the Lok Sabha it will amount to a censure and the Government will fall.* The Executive is responsible to the House. This is the ABC of parliamentary democracy.

An American Supreme Court Justice asked himself this question:

> Although I find the Tennessee apportionment statute offends the Equal Protection Clause, I would not consider intervention by this Court into so delicate a field if there were any other relief available to the people of Tennessee ... I have searched diligently for other "practical opportunities" present under the law. I find none other than through the federal courts. *(Baker v Carr)*

The Tennessee voters had suffered for over forty years and had no remedy. Assuming that Sunder Lal Patwa had a genuine grievance (and I don't think he had), was there no remedy in sight? The elections have to be held within a year and he can obtain redress at the polls. The intervention of the Court was really not called for, especially when the *Rajastan Case* was the effective law declared by the Supreme Court.

◆

JURISTS and constitutional pundits live in the clouds of abstractions about federalism and State autonomy without taking into account the responsibility of the Centre to protect the constitutional order. After all federalism is only one element of the constitutional order. What about the other ingredients? The Rule of Law, for instance. Can anything be more basic? This was deliberately destroyed by the BJP Governments. The *Sangh Parivar* does not subscribe to federalism. Its spiritual leader and chief, M.S. Golwalkar, wanted to abolish the States and State Assemblies and establish a unitary Constitution. To say that the other three governments were not responsible for what happened in Ayodhya is stretching technicalities to absurd lengths. We have a party system recognised by the Representation of the People's Act, 1951, and the Tenth Schedule. An Act provides for recognition of the Leader of the Opposition in both Houses of Parliament. The BJP is a centralised party. It is part of the centralised *RSS Parivar.* It takes pride in being a very disciplined outfit, operating on the principle of unified direction—*ekachalakanuvartitva.* Ministers have to swear allegiance to the Constitution. All BJP Chief Ministers took oath and then proceeded, in a concerted manner, to provide volunteers and other resources for the perpetration of vandalism in Ayodhya. It seemed as if the BJP Governments were mounting an invasion against Ayodhya.

The Supreme Court issued orders which were not only disobeyed by the UP Government, under the direction of the RSS-VHP-BJP-Bajrang Dal, but disobeyed in a cynical manner. L.K. Advani, S.S. Bhandari, M.M. Joshi and Rajendra Singh all said the structure would not be harmed. And yet it was destroyed. In the "august presence" of the top *Parivar* leaders. With their encouragement. Not one of them protested. The same set of people controlled the destinies of the other three governments. How could they be trusted after all that happened?

Had Kalyan Singh resigned three days in advance, allowing the Central forces to move in, there would have been no demolition of the structure and the Sangh Pariwar and its government would not have been accused of perfidy. And then there would have been no occasion for action under Article 356. It is not the judges' subjective satisfaction which is involved here but the President's and Central Cabinet's assessment and satisfaction. If the Centre can be faulted at all, it can only be on the ground that it did not act swiftly and decisively in the evening of December 6, 1992. ▣

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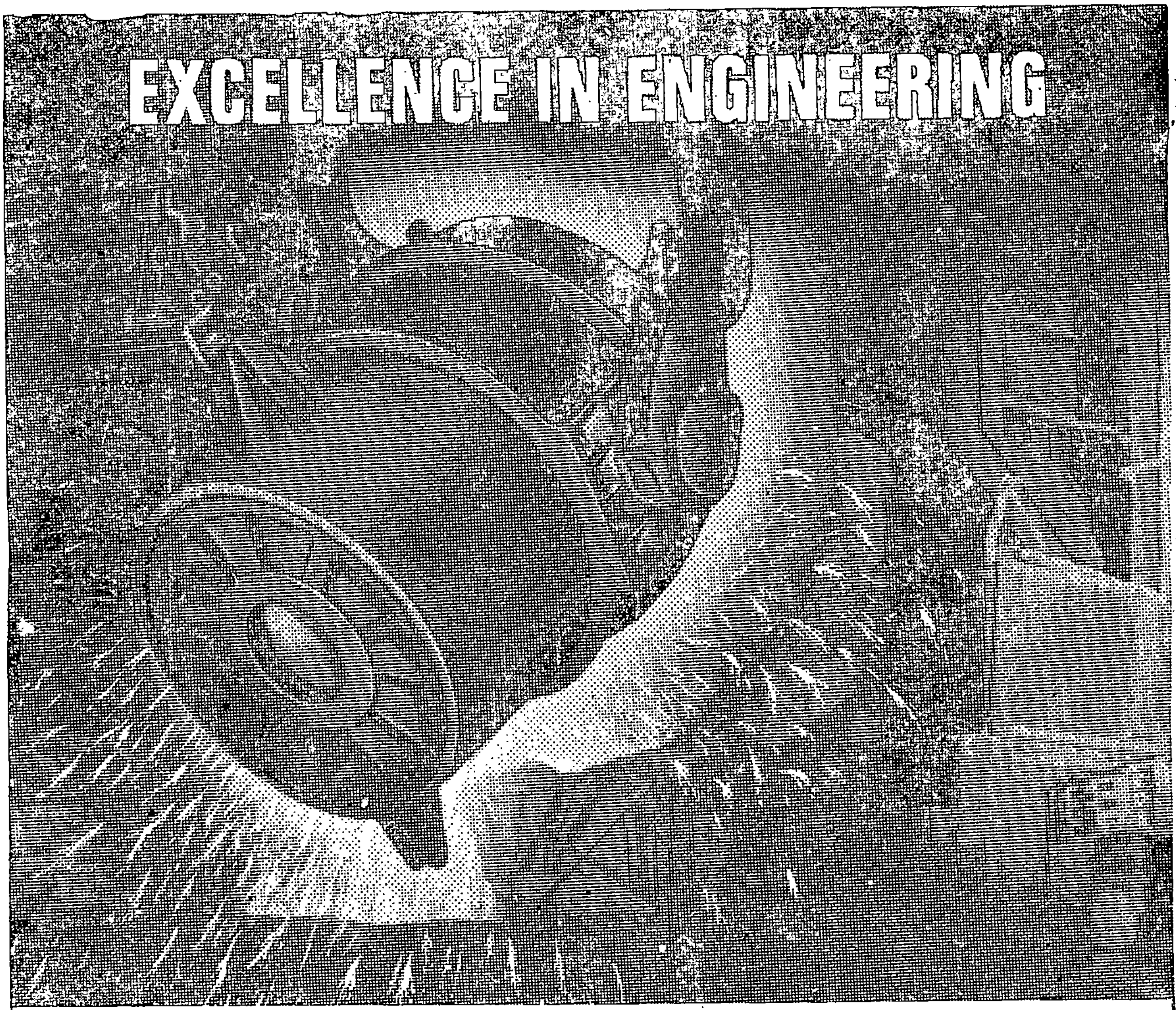

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EDITORIAL

Terror Strikes Again

Terrorism in South Asia has claimed yet another victim: Ranasinghe Premadasa, the executive President of the island-republic which has lately been rocked by widespread violence taking a heavy toll in terms of precious lives. Only a few days ago one of his principal political opponents, Lalith Athulathmudali (who, alongwith Gamini Dissanayeke, another stalwart of the ruling United National Party, was thrown out of the organisation and forced to set up a new body, the Democratic United National Front), was brutally gunned down and killed while addressing a meeting as part of the DUNF campaign for the ensuing provincial elections (wherein Athulathmudali was widely expected to emerge victorious as the Chief Minister of the Western province). There was no love lost between the two leaders and the DUNF had held the ruling party's so-called "killer squads" responsible for the killing of Athulathmudali thereby pointing the accusing finger at Premadasa himself. However, Premadasa's tragic assassination by a young man on a suicide mission on May Day in central Colombo has added a new dimension to Sri Lankan politics, and it is now transparent that a determined attempt to destabilise the country's polity is at work.

No doubt from the *modus operandi* (employed also in the murder of Admiral Clancy Fernando, the Sri Lankan Navy chief, in the heart of Colombo last November, not to speak of Rajiv Gandhi's assassination in Tamil Nadu in May 1991) the needle of suspicion is directed at the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the only outfit in Sri Lanka apparently making headway towards its objective: of realising an independent Tamil homeland in the north of Sri Lanka with the power of firearms. The LTTE, which has through its activities been able to project itself as one of the world's most effective terrorist groups, has had the unique distinction of using the most sophisticated weapons and equipment in carrying out its diabolical operations. Suffice it to recall only the gruesome murders of Ranjan Wijeratne, Rajiv Gandhi and Clancy Fernando that carried the distinct imprint of the Tigers' meticulous organisational skills. The LTTE's hands are soiled with the blood of several others martyrs, prominent among them being the Tamil United Liberation Front leader, A. Amrithalingam, and the Secretary-General of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front, K. Padmanabha. Premadasa's assassination now provides a fresh idea of the Tigers' potentiality to influence Sri Lankan polity with the resounding success of reaching its targets in the course of its terrorist onslaughts. This is a direct threat to the democratic aspirations of the people of our region and India cannot remain indifferent to such a potent danger.

Nonetheless, what cannot be overlooked even at the time of this tragic assassination is the high-handed, arbitrary, authoritarian measures resorted to by Premadasa primarily against the growing terrorism in the southern part of the island-state under the auspices of the Janata Vimukti Peramuna (JVP) which began as a Marxist organisation in the seventies but gradually degenerated into a Sinhala chauvinist body of armed terrorists—the Sinhala counterpart of Tamil chauvinism represented by the LTTE. The JVP leaders skilfully used the emotive issue of the presence of Indian troops in Sri Lanka to whip up Sinhala chauvinism and, according to competent observers, were on the verge of seizing power in 1989 with the use of coercive and terror tactics including manifold cases of inhuman brutalities. It was at this stage that Premadasa, the man of the masses catapulted to the highest seat of power in the country, applied every conceivable strong-arm method to counter the JVP terror. In fact this counter state terror resulted in mass killings estimated to reach the staggering figure of 60,000.

In the name of fighting and decimating the JVP activists—its top-ranking leaders including the supremo, Rohan Wijeweera, were all liquidated ruthlessly by the "killer squads" of the Premadasa administration—numerous political activists of rival organisations like the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and the Leftist groups were physically removed from the scene, the list of "missing" persons touching an all-time high (and among them were a substantial number of journalists like Richard D'Zoysa whose body, thrown into the sea, was brought to the shore by the receding tide thereby exposing the ugly face of state terror in Sri Lanka). Even if one cannot take a uniform view on how best to tackle the menace posed by organisations like the JVP and the LTTE wedded to violence and terror, there can be no two opinions—especially in the wake of Premadasa's assassination—that state terror of the kind unleashed with great efficacy by the Premadasa administration cannot bring about lasting peace in any part of the world. For it provides legitimacy to the application of force with deadly firearms thus institutionalising the cult of violence itself.

Premadasa's assassination underlines, therefore, the urgency of launching in all seriousness a non-violent peaceful mass movement against the increasing trend of terrorisation of South Asian polity. The urgency is heightened by the fact that the danger posed by such terrorist depredations is enhanced all the more in view of their capability of dealing a mortal blow to the edifice of democracy assiduously built over the years in our region as a whole.

May 5 *S.C.*

TRIBUTE

N.G. Goray

With the demise of the socialist leader and veteran freedom fighter, N.G. Goray, in Pune on May 1, the day on which the Maharashtra State was born, yet another luminary of our national movement has passed into history thereby leaving the country and its people poorer.

A close associate of the socialist stalwart S.M. Joshi, 'Nanasaheb' (as he was popularly called) was born in the Devgud taluk of Ratnagiri district on June 15, 1907. He had his education in Pune and under Mahatma Gandhi's inspiration was drawn into the vortex of the freedom struggle in 1930 suffering repeated imprisonments in its trail.

He stood by Acharya Narendra Dev in the formation of the socialist group inside the Congress in 1934. In 1942 he plunged wholeheartedly into the 'Quit India' struggle and went underground alongwith Jaya Prakash Narayan and other leaders.

Following independence the split in the socialist forces saw him leading the Praja Socialist Party (PSP) for a period of time. Nanasaheb represented the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti and was elected to the Lok Sabha on its ticket in 1957. He became Mayor of Pune in 1967. From 1970 to 1977 he was a Rajya Sabha member. During the tenure of the first Janata Government at the Centre he was sent to London as the Indian High Commissioner to the UK.

A product of the social reform movement, he married a child widow, Sumati. Like several socialist leaders he led a simple life steeped in Gandhian values and ideals. His lifelong association with socialist thought and action was accompanied by abhorrence of the totalitarian system that had sought to usurp the term 'socialist' thereby undermining the essence of socialism.

President of the Pune-based 'Deh-daan Mandal', an association encouraging donation of bodies, Nanasaheb's own body was not donated for medical research on account of his advanced age; but his eyes were removed by the doctors in accordance with his wishes.

The Maharashtra Government wanted to give him a state funeral but that had to be abandoned due to Nanasaheb's own desire against such an honour being bestowed on him.

He will be remembered for long for his constructive work in different spheres of activity always holding aloft the torch of the national movement.

Charvak

Attack on Filmdom

P.K. RAVINDRANATH

The script the Bombay police have written for the matinee idol, Sanjay Dutt, is designed to make a true-to-pattern Hindi film hero of the actor. He is now in the last-but-one reel where he has to contend with a dozen gangsters, single-handed, unarmed and bleeding, but unyielding.

In the typical Salim-Javed, Manmohan Desai, Subhash Ghai script, the hero has to win in the final round, whatever the odds and however overpowering the hazards. Whoever wrote the police script for the current drama involving Sanjay Dutt, overdid the Hitchcock element of suspense.

The night Sanjay Dutt, was to return to Bombay from a shooting assignment in Mauritius, his father, Sunil Dutt had taken pains to inform the Police Commissioner about the time of the flight. Dutt Sr. also took the trouble of informing the Chief Minister, Sharad Pawar, according to the latter's testimony.

And what do the gallant policemen do? They swarm the Sahar airport hours before the Mauritius flight was to land, and make their presence felt with arms appropriate for capturing a dreaded terrorist who, they suspect, is also equally well-armed.

And then, they whisk the terrified young actor, who would willingly have driven straight to the Police Commissioner's office from the airport, if only his father had been told to bring his son for interrogation.

When he is produced before the appropriate judge on charges under the TADA, the police make sure that the entire press corps is present and according to Sanjay's sister, Priya Dutt, were specifically asked to shoot, so that the accompanying cops could bask in the momentary glory of rubbing shoulders with a Bombay star.

Dutt is remanded to police custody for a fortnight, but on the third day of the remand, doubts had surfaced if charges under the TADA would stick, or if the star should have been charged with a lesser offence of possessing an unlicenced machinegun, on which he could easily have been convicted, even for a lesser period. The police found that they would really have to strain hard to marshal evidence of Sanjay Dutt's involvement with the ISI, Dawood Ibrahim, "Tiger" Memon and a host of others who must have masterminded the dozen explosions in Bombay on March 12.

Sanjay's father, the Congress-I MP, Sunil Dutt, admits that his son was naive and a fool to have acquired so sophisticated a weapon as an AK-56 from Hanif Kadawala and Sameer Hingora, involved in film production and distribution and whom the star had known for sometime. Dutt Sr. now charges that the duo had deliberately taken advantage of Sanjay's fascination for guns to frame him up with the gift of an Ak-56.

Even the Chief Minister, Sharad Pawar, told the State Assembly on April 21 that he feared a deliberate attempt to involve film personalities in the bomb blast, to enable the real culprits and perpetrators of the crime to hide behind the smokescreen. Whoever was masterminding this diabolical game knew full well how stars, singers, musicians, comedians and others in the film industry were involved with Dawood Ibrahim, the don of the Indian underworld now in exile in Dubai. Many of them had partaken of his hospitality in Dubai or had come in contact with him through his henchmen in Bombay. The Arabs in Dubai, like all Indians, are crazy about film stars and Dawood had it in his power to parade them before his Arab associates.

Indian stars and film personalities unthinkingly welcomed the offer of a paid holiday in the Gulf, with all hospitality laid out, plus the generosity of the oil barons.

The fraternisation had been on for quite sometime with "entertainment troupes" of stars and others going on periodic visits to Dubai and other Gulf centres. It was at one such programme that a bit role player in Hindi films with a penchant for cheap comedy, by the screen name of Johnny Lever, parodied the Indian national anthem on the stage at a show in Dubai, ostensibly in the presence of Dawood Ibrahim. He had a lot to answer for when he landed back on Indian soil.

Since the tours of these entertainers are all arranged by the local contacts of the Dubai don it is but natural that close links are soon forged by those in the film industry and the underworld. This has been known to the Bombay police.

The current exposures would tend to make all film personalities more circumspect in dealing with shady characters and particularly those from the underworld.

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SANJAY DUTT committed a grave indiscretion in acquiring the AK-56 from one involved in the bomb blasts of March 12, but there is nothing to prove that he himself had any link with the blasts. He had no motive for it. When Kadawala and Hingora first told the police about Sanjay Dutt having purchased one AK-56 from them, he denied it. It was only under interrogation and when confronted with the presence of Kadawala and Hingora at the police headquarters, that Sanjay broke down and confessed that he had bought the rifle from them. He revealed that he had it destroyed.

The wave of resentment against the young star is ebbing and unless the police are able to "fix" him properly, the last reel would show Sanjay Dutt emerging a hero out of the ordeal, with public sympathy swaying in his favour.

As it is, there is a feeling that had it not been for the vociferous campaign launched by the BJP and the Shiv Sena, the incident may not have attracted all the attention it did. The two *Hindutva* champions have a reason to politically exploit the episode; they consider Sunil Dutt their sworn enemy. They had lost three elections against him and they have always disliked his championing the cause of the minorities in his constituency.

The two parties soon clubbed other film personalities also in their campaign against those who "appease the minorities". Included in this list were A.K. Hangal, Shabana Azmi and Dilip Kumar. A lot of vile and pernicious allegations were let loose against all of them in the columns of the Shiv Sena mouthpiece *Saamna* and other publications, almost all in Marathi. These were followed by calls for boycott of their films.

The Sena itself undertook the task of censoring out Hangal's performance in G.P. Sippy's *Sholay*, a decade-and-a-half after the film had run its full course all over the country and abroad. Even the National Film Development Corporation hurriedly withdrew from its exhibition *Dharavi* since it starred Shabana Azmi.

May 9 is Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's one hundred and thirtysecond birth anniversary. To pay homage to his memory on the occasion we are reproducing the famous lines of the Tagore poem which had inspired Mahatma Gandhi in the communal riots in Noakhali in 1946.—Editor

Walk Alone

If they answer not to thy call walk alone,
If they are afraid and cower mutely
facing the wall,
O thou of evil luck,
open thy mind and speak out alone.

If they turn away, and desert you when
crossing the wilderness
O thou of evil luck,
trample the thorns under thy tread,
and along the blood-lined track travel
alone.

If they do not hold up the light
when the night is troubled with storm,
O thou of evil luck,
with the thunder flame of pain ignite
thine own heart
and let it burn alone.

— Rabindranath Tagore

Dilip Kumar was left to challenge the assertions of *Saamna* and its vile propaganda against him and to affirm his loyalty to the country.

Sunil Dutt also had to call a press conference to denounce the campaign launched against him. He alleged that his son had been "framed" and that the attack on Sunjay Dutt was an attack on him personally.

Two years ago, when the Shiv Sena had organised a Bombay bandh, Sunil Dutt had been assaulted by its volunteers in full view of the police. The MP's report to the Chief Minister about the incident and identification of the policemen who had refused to come to his aid, produced no result.

Later, during the December and January riots, all three—Dilip Kumar, Shabana Azmi and Sunil Dutt—had been active in organising relief for the victims. Sunil Dutt was in the field, unlike the others who operated from their homes or offices for fear of being mobbed or creating law and order problems when they appear in public.

The attacks on Hangal, Dilip Kumar, Sunil Dutt and Shabana Azmi constitute an attempt to destabilise and destroy the Hindi film industry, alongwith other democratic institutions in the country, by the fascist forces, represented by the advocates of *Hindutva*.

This is in line with the persistent attacks on the press, the judiciary, the administration and the democratic system in recent times, with a move to denigrate them. The Hindi film industry is now sought to be singled out for a vicious campaign to besmirch the public image of its leading lights, to erode their credibility.

Why is the Hindi film industry singled out for this treatment? It has been for over sixty years a unifying factor in the country, upholding secular ideals and spreading its own brand of culture and ideals. Top names in the film industry—from Lata Mangeshkar, Dilip Kumar, Dev Anand down to Anil Kapoor—have all emerged as symbols of a composite Indian culture. The industry has done more than any other institution to promote Hindi as a common language in the country.

Hindi films have cut across language, communal, casteist or group loyalties and differences to propagate a common Indianhood. This has to be destroyed if the nefarious schemes of the *Hindutva* brigade to capture power is to be attained.

This is why moves to single out individuals in the film industry and discredit them should be fought at all levels—by the people, by organisations that stand for the freedom of expression, and ultimately the government itself, if it is to uphold the Constitution it is sworn to. ■

RUSSIA

Message of Referendum

SUMIT CHAKRAVARTTY

With the referendum over in Russia what *Komsomolskaya Pravda* described as the “war of interpretations” has begun in right earnest. The run-up to the referendum of April 25 showed both sides resorting to a no-holds-barred campaign. While President Boris Yeltsin openly attacked his Vice-President, Alexander Rutskoi, and stripped him of his state limousine, most bodyguards and a personal doctor (and removed him from his post supervising Russian agricultural reform soon after the referendum), Rutskoi (a) charged that while the “financial system of the government is totally destroyed”, there was a massive flight of capital from Russia in 1992—“according to some sources $17 billion and according to others $ 40 billion”—equivalent to the Russian national income last year; and (b) accused a former Deputy Minister, Shibayev, of having received a $ 30 million kickback from India in a crude oil deal. Now the electorate (of 106 million, among whom 65 per cent exercised their franchise has conveyed decisive support for President Boris Yeltsin as well as his economic reforms (which took many an observer by surprise as even Yeltsin’s ardent supporters were quite apprehensive of his electoral performance on this question because the “shock therapy” that he administered in the name of economic reforms since January 1992 has led to considerable impoverishment of the populace).

However, if one dispassionately analyses the results of the referendum certain aspects of the outcome come out in bold relief. Yeltsin has undoubtedly won the vote of confidence to himself and his reforms from the Russian people, and this in the face of the acute economic crisis through which the public are passing at the moment is quite striking indeed. Fiftyeight per cent of the voters who exercised their franchise expressed confidence in Yeltsin while 53 per cent of the voters who cast their votes backed his economic reforms. Initially it was stated that to win the vote of confidence on the first and second questions in the referendum (namely, ‘do you trust the President?’ and ‘do you support his socio-economic policy?’) Yeltsin must secure more than 50 per cent support of the entire 106 million electorate. Later, however, the Constitutional Court ruled that instead of securing over 50 per cent of the electorate’s support, he would win the vote of confidence on those two queries only if he receives backing from more than 50 per cent of the voters who exercised their franchise. Hence there is no doubt that on both these questions Yeltsin won decisively.

On the other two questions in the referendum (namely, ‘do you favour early Presidential elections?’ and ‘do you favour early elections to the Congress?’) the Court had ruled that the validity of the ‘yes’ vote would be guaranteed only if it embraces more than half the entire electorate. Since 65 per cent of the 106 million voters had exercised their franchise this was practically impossible to achieve. But what is significant is that on both these queries the ‘yes’ vote did not cross the mark of even 50 per cent of the total votes cast. While 57 per cent were totally against the holding of early elections to the office of the President, as many as 43 per cent wanted early elections to Parliament.

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LET us now take a peep into the recent past. After the abortive coup of August 1991 and the disbanding of the Communist Party when the initiative passed on to the hands of Yeltsin and Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet President, was gradually marginalised before being edged out of the scene with the historic disintegration of the USSR, the Russian Congress of People’s Deputies extended certain extraordinary powers to President Yeltsin in the hope that he would be able to bring about economic recovery through his free-market reforms. Yeltsin began with a bang on January 1, 1992 with his “shock therapy” that freed prices, and went on towards wholesale privatisation and introduction of an unfettered free-market. It led to a phenomenal rise in inflation (currently the annual inflation rate is running at 2500 per cent) while the value of the rouble plumetted sharply (now it is hovering around 800 roubles to a dollar and soon it would reach 1000 roubles to a dollar) thereby severely hurting the vulnerable sections of society (like pensioners). Hence the mega-Parliament, the Congress of People’s Deputies, witnessing the consequences of the “shock therapy” piloted by the erstwhile Prime Minister, Yegor Gaidar, wanted by April 1992 to take back the extraordinary powers it had given to Yeltsin. Thus began the longdrawn conflict between the two.

The showdown became inevitable at the Congress session last December. Yegor Gaidar was replaced by the Centrist Deputy, Victor Chernomyrdin, as the new Prime Minister. Eventually a compromise was hammered out at that session: the President would go ahead with his planned referendum in April 1993 on his Presidency and the principles of a new Constitution while the Parliament's veto powers on Presidential decrees would be frozen; in turn, the government would strive for economic stabilisation.

However, by March 1993 the situation had changed in the wake of the worsening economic conditions. When the Congress of People's Deputies reassembled on March 10, the December compromise agreement was annulled and the President was stripped of his powers. The Congress rejected Yeltsin's plea for a "strong Presidential power". While neo-Communists like Sergei Baburin of the Russian Unity faction strongly opposed Yeltsin, sharp attacks came from even such successful entrepreneurs like Mikhail Bocharev (whom this writer had the privilege of meeting in Moscow in the summer of 1989) who sarcastically remarked: "What economic reforms is he talking about? There has been no reform in Russia. Mr Yeltsin has only used his power to wreck and impoverish our economy. Look at the mess he has created. We have to take those powers back from him before we can even begin setting Russia on the right path."

Following the defeat he suffered in the Congress, Yeltsin retaliated with a vengeance. His followers like Lev Ponomaryov, leader of the Democratic Russia coalition, had been criticising him of being too conciliatory towards the Congress. So he hit back. He declared virtual emergency on March 20 and called for "special rule" by Presidential decree till the holding of the referendum on April 25. This was found to be violative of several articles of the Constitution by the Constitutional Court. The Court's verdict spurred the Deputies, led by the Speaker of the mega-Parliament, Ruslan Khasbulatov, to call for the President's impeachment.

In the meantime Chernomyrdin played a major role in brokering a compromise agreement between Yeltsin and Khasbulatov. According to the compromise, Yeltsin would drop his plans for a national referendum on April 25 and early Presidential and parliamentary elections would be simultaneously held on November 21. It was also agreed that in June the legislature in consultation with the executive would adopt the principles of the new Constitution and the electoral laws that would govern both the elections.

The Deputies were incensed on learning of the compromise. They were not prepared to lose their privileges much before the expiry of their five-year tenure. Hence they turned it down. They also voted for impeachment of Yeltsin and removal of Khasbulatov from Speakership. Both of them survived, however, Yeltsin's impeachment proposal falling short of the requisite two-thirds majority by only 72 votes. Yeltsin, who had earlier announced that he would ignore the result, described it as a "victory". But Khasbulatov interpreted the result differently. He said Yeltsin's survival by only 72 votes was indicative of the Deputies' no-confidence in his reforms programme. The mega-Parliament finally approved the April 25 referendum but not before tagging three more questions to the query 'do you trust the President?' These were: 'do you support his socio-economic policy?', 'do you favour early Presidential elections?' and 'do you favour early elections to the Congress?'

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IT is clear from the above that the President was out to teach the Parliament a lesson. He campaigned for both himself and his reforms and against the Parliament, calling for early elections (although he wanted a 'no' vote on the third query relating to early Presidential poll). The result clearly shows that while the voters opted for Yeltsin and his economic reforms, they did not give a verdict of no-confidence in the Parliament; instead the latter received a kind of confidence vote with a majority of the voters who participated in the referendum rejecting the call for early elections.

It needs to be pointed out that while Yeltsin has won by a decisive margin, it does not constitute overwhelming support. First, as Rutskoi pointed out, 32 million voted in favour of Yeltsin. Which means a majority—of over 70 million— either opposed him at the hustings or did not cast their vote. (This, Rutskoi argued, signified a defeat for Yeltsin. Even if one does not concede that point, Rutskoi's reference to 70 million not favouring Yeltsin cannot just be brushed aside.) Secondly, although it is being stated that this time Yeltsin secured more percentage of votes (58) than what he had received at the time of his election to the office of the Russian President in June 1991 (57), the fact is that the percentage of polling in 1991 was higher (about 70) than this time (65)—so in terms of numbers Yeltsin won less votes from the electorate than in 1991. Thirdly, of the 89 regions that make up the electoral college, 42—a substantial number—opposed his economic reforms. Fourthly, he won overwhelming support from only seven out of the 21 constituent republics in the Russian Federation. Fifthly, while Yeltsin failed to get majority support in three republics (less than 50 per cent voted for him in Mordoviya and Chuvashiya, and only two per cent of the voters in tiny Ingushetia expressed confidence in Yeltsin), the voting in Tatarstan was invalidated as a mere 21 per cent of the electorate came out to exercise their franchise (according to the procedure laid down by the Constitutional

(Continued on page 32)

Religious Tolerance

S. NURUL HASAN

Prof Hasan, the distinguished scholar and educationist, is the Governor of West Bengal. The following is the text of the Dr Yusuf Najmuddin Memorial Lecture he delivered at a function (organised by the Anjuman-i-Islam) in Bombay (April 25, 1993). —Editor

I am grateful to you for inviting me to deliver this year's Dr Yusuf Najmuddin Memorial Lecture under the auspices of Anjuman-i-Islam, Bombay. Dr Yusuf Najmuddin was a distinguished scholar of Arabic and Islamic Studies and his services to the cause of the promotion of higher learning in this subject will ever be remembered. I had the good fortune of enjoying his personal friendship. This lecture is in the nature of a humble tribute to the memory of my revered friend.

Anjuman-i-Islam has been rendering valuable services to the country, especially to the Muslim community of Bombay. I do hope that it will continue to make a contribution to the cause of national integration, of enlightenment and of intellectual progress.

The subject that has been chosen for my lecture is of great importance in the existing context of national life. Unfortunately, the forces of fanaticism, obscurantism and religious intolerance are raising their ugly heads and some of the recent happenings are a blot on the fair name of the nation.

It is undoubtedly true that there has always been an undercurrent of fanaticism and intolerance in the course of our history. There were examples of the suppression of Buddhist and Jain places of worship by Brahminical fanatics and later by the Muslim rulers. Not far from Bombay, in Goa the dreaded Inquisition operated under state patronage. One of the Maratha Peshwas gave the call for Hindu Pad Padshahite in the eighteenth century and some fanatical Mullahs urged the Muslim rulers, whenever they got an opportunity to do so, to undertake the suppression of non-Muslim faith and followers.

And yet notwithstanding such aberrations, India developed a culture of tolerance, of broadmindedness and of the assimilation of the contributions of the various religious, ethnic, linguistic groups into the mainstream of India's national life. The great Emperor, Ashoka, stands out in our collective memory as a champion of tolerance and compassion. The Emperor Harsha in the seventh century gave encouragement to the followers of Brahminism as well as of Buddhism. The various rulers of the western coast of India welcomed the people of diverse faiths to come and settle down as peaceful citizens, enjoying liberty of conscience and of culture. The Parsis who were persecuted and virtually hounded out of Persia found an asylum in India where they were enabled to maintain their own identity, faith and way of life. To this day this Parsi community, even though a microscopic minority, has nevertheless acquired a place of honour and distinction in India's cultural and economic life. The Christians and Jews came and settled down in India long before they reached western Europe, and throughout the centuries they have lived in peace and harmony with their neighbours belonging to other communities. The Arabs started coming to India as traders even before the rise of Islam. They continued to do so after they adopted Islam as their faith. The Muslim community on the west coast of India was not only tolerated but provided with all facilities to live happily.

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WITH the establishment of the Turkish Sultanate in Delhi, and later provincial Sultanates in different parts of the country an ideological problem was faced by the rulers. The *Shariat* (that is the religious law) as it had developed, and Islamic political theory as it had evolved outside India, did not have to deal with multi-religious societies. In the Indian context, therefore, the Sultan took pragmatic, political and administrative decisions, ignoring the *Shariat* law in favour of political and military expediency. Sultan Iltutmish is supposed to have said that it was not necessary for a Sultan to follow the dictates of the faith. It would be enough for him to defend the faith. Balban, it is said, went a step forward when he proclaimed that a Sultan could neither be expected to follow the faith nor even to be its defendant. It would be enough if he could dispense justice.

Alauddin Khilji made the important statement that he did not know whether his actions were in accordance with the *Shariat* or not. Whatever he considered to be expedient for the state that he decreed. Muhammad Bin-Tughlak tried to keep the theologians and the custodians of the religious law at arms length and preferred the company of philosophers and logicians. Akbar took a major step when during the second half of his reign he proclaimed the philosophy of *Sulh-i-kul*, peace with all. The Mughal Emperor henceforward did not permit religious dogmas to interfere with political decision-making or in the appointment of grandees, nobles or officers. The highest offices of the realm were thrown open to non-Muslims, such as Raja Man Singh, Raja Todar Mal, Raja Birbal, Mirza Raja Jai Singh, and Maharaja Jashwant Singh. The tradition of Muslim rulers appointing Hindus as their trusted nobles and officers, and of Hindu rulers appointing Muslims to posts of confidence became well-established. What the rulers demanded was the test of loyalty and of ability, not religious affinity.

Shivaji was known for his religious tolerance. Tipu Sultan had established the temple inside the fort at Srirangapattanam. Bhau Sahib had appointed Ibrahim Khan Gardi as the Commander of his artillery. At the third battle of Panipat he gave his life to save that of Bhau Saheb. Mahadaji Sindhia did not dethrone the powerless Shah Alam but obtained for the Peshwa the title and rank of Vakil and for himself that of the Wazir. The Marathas took revenge from Ghulam Qadir Rohilla for having blinded Shah Alam. Even during the twentieth century Maharaja Sir Krishna Prasad was the Sadr-i-Azam of the Nizam of Hyderabad while Sir Mirza Ismail was the Diwan of the Maharajah of Mysore.

The attitude of religious tolerance and of judging secular matters on the basis of secular considerations was not confined to the political field alone. The Hindus and Muslims had learnt the art of living together. The members of the one community participated in the festivals of the other community. Social manners and customs and traditions tended to be common to the Hindus and Muslims of a particular locality or region or social and economic group. The majority of the lower class Muslims were of course local converts and they did not give up the customs and traditions of their forefathers. But even the immigrants and their descendants were assimilated socially in the mainstream of the life of the country. They retained their basic religious identity in other matters including value system; they could not be differentiated from their Hindu neighbours.

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IN the field of culture, this process of synthesis is even more marked. A number of Muslim poets wrote in Hindi. They selected themes from the Indian folklore, frequently based on Indian mythology. Mulla Daud in his long poem, 'Chandayan', wrote of the love of Laur and Chanda, while Malik Muhammad Jaisi's famous poem deals with the story of Padmavati. These and many other Muslim writers in Hindi were criticised for adopting Hindu religious idioms, and in the middle of the sixteenth century some Muslims had to explain that Hindu religious symbolism corresponded to Sufi's symbolism. At Akbar's Court, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were translated into Persian, as was the famous story of Raja Nal and Damayanti. Prince Dara Shukoh wrote the well-known work, *Marjul Bahrain* (the mingling of two oceans), showing the similarity of Tauhid and Vedantic philosophy, particularly the concept of Advaitavad. Raja Rammohun Roy's *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahiddin* was written in the great tradition of thinkers and religious leaders like Guru Nanak Dev. Kabir had sung of Ram and Rahim. Dadu had spoken of Nipakh, of which he was very proud. Guru Granth Saheb contained extensive quotations from Kabir as well as Baba Farid. In the nineteenth century an Urdu writer like Pandit Ratannath Sarshar described in his *Fasana-i-Azad* the social life based on the mingling of Hindu and Muslim traditions. Pandir Brij Narain Chakhast wrote in the elegy form of Urdu poetry about various episodes of *Ramayana*. Even some of the famous Persian works written outside India were carefully studied by both Hindu and

Muslim litterati, such as Gulistan, the Bostan of Saadi, the Odes of Hafiz, and the Masnavi of Maulana Rum.

In the field of music, one could see the process of cultural synthesis even more clearly—Amir Khusrau was well versed in the Indian musical traditions which he combined with the Persian and the Central Asian tradition. Towards the end of the fourteenth century was composed the famous work on Indian classical music, *Ghuniyat-ul-Muniya* which had utilised many of the traditional granths of Indian music, some of which later became extinct. *Lahjat-i-Sikandar Shahi* was another significant theoretical contribution to Indian musicology. The performing art of Indian music was enriched by the contributions of Hindu and Muslim musicians alike. This rich tradition continues till today. If we bear in mind the fact that the *Shariat* does not permit the practice of the type of music that prevailed in India, the full involvement of Muslims not only in the performing art of music but also in its patronage at the Court would indicate that the cultural life was not determined by the limitations of the religious law.

The art of miniature painting which developed so rapidly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries received its initial impulse from the artists of Central Asia and Persia, but the full involvement of Hindus of all classes in this tradition led to the efflorescence of this art. In addition to the Mughal school, schools of painting rapidly emerged in different parts of the country, so that by the eighteenth century, we had the Kangra School, the Pahari School, the Decani School, the School of Avadh, the Patna Kalam, the Bengali Kalam, etc.

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DRAWING their inspiration from some of the verses of the Quran, the Sufis had put forward the concept that devotion to God and gnosis could only be achieved by divine grace and for that it was not necessary to subscribe to the rigid rules of the *Shariat*. In fact they put forward the view that the *Shariat* was a mere formality and bred hypocrisy. It detracted from the sincerity of the human spirit in its devotion to the divine spirit. However, as a result of the efforts of many leading Sufis a compromise formula was evolved whereby most of the Sufis agreed that the first step of spiritual progress was following the *Shariat*, but it was only the first step and one had to move forward on the path of spiritual progress so that the human spirit could attend gnosis and merge with divine reality.

In poetic licence, however, this reference to the *Shariat* being the essential first step, was conveniently ignored. All the symbolism which the Muslim religious orthodoxy disapproved of was employed to denote a truly sincere effort to reach the Divine Reality. The Divine Reality was referred to as the great beauty which could be perceived only by devotion, which was symbolised by wine. The Public House was considered to be sacred and pure. The master of the Public House was someone who showed the spiritual path, and was therefore to be preferred to the theologian. Even the Kaaba, held as sacred by all Muslims, was in Sufic symbolism considered to be less pure than the heart of a devotee who was sincere. In fact the worship of idol which has been condemned in the *Shariat* became the poetic terminology, symbolic of the devotion to the Divine Reality. The poets had spoken of rejecting Islam and its rituals so as to be able to perceive the Divine Reality more effectively.

This tradition of poetry softened the attitude of Muslims towards orthodoxy. In view of the fact that poems with Sufistic flavour, whether in Persian, or Hindi or Urdu, were commonly sung in the musical soirees of the Sufis where hundred of thousands of people came to hear them. The impact of such poems on the people can be well imagined.

The finest exponents of Hinduism in modern times also spoke of an attitude of tolerance, compassion and respect for other faiths. At the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, 100 years ago, Swami Vivekananda quoted from the Scriptures:

> As different streams, having their sources in different places, all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they may appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee.

He further quoted:

> Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him. All men are sttruggling through paths which in the end lead to Me.

Would Indian culture be recognisable without religious tolerance?

Jai Hind! ■

The following are the background papers for the National Convention of Socialists held at Hyderabad on March 20-21, 1993. —Editor

Wanted: A New Socialist Identity

SURENDRA MOHAN

While the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe has been rightly ascribed to the absence of democratic polity, centralisation and absence of self-management, the ills from which social democracy suffers have not been fully brought out. While it is recognised that the urges of radical change must revive their elan, the challenge of feminism, the Green movement and decentralisation or autonomy have not been recognised as representing those radical urges. Michel Rocard, the French Socialist leader, has said recently that the socialist movement must broaden its base by identifying itself with these issues.

Within our own country, debate on the issues which can revive our movement will have to take into account similar challenges. With us, it would be easier to do so because kindred spirits have been actively engaged in such movements. The advocacy of small unit machine, small rather than large dams, desilting of rivers like the Ganga and the greening of the Himalayas, apart from recognising regional cultural autonomies and specificities by the founders of our movement should have to be recalled in order to reintergrate these challenges. That is, those groups who raise pertinent issues about safeguarding the rights of the local communities on common property resources, forests, water and land; those who are agitating for regional autonomy, creation of small States; larger powers to the State and Panchayati Raj institutions in the context of federalism and devolution of power should form a part of reinvigorated socialist movement.

The isssue of social justice has been central in the evolution of socialist thought and practice. It was, however, part of an integrated onslaught on social and economic privileges and inequities. The fight against economic injustice was as much a part of our movement as the one against caste hierarchy. But the neglect of the former has created an imbalance. The struggle for social justice came to be conducted in a manner that the consolidation of the backward castes has not given proper recognition to the place of the most backward castes. Moreover, the distance between the BCs and SCs has increased instead of decreasing. Thirdly, social reform related to man-woman equality also has been neglected. Caste prejudices have divided the poor forwards from the poor backwards and poor Dalits. The socialist movement which always insisted on the gradual weakening of the caste system, advocated the unification of the poor of all castes and religious communities, and worked for the equality of the sexes will have to influence the movement for social justice in the above directions.

Socialists had once a high profile presence among tribal communities. Districts like Jhabua, Durgapur, Banswada, Godhra, Dhulia, Chandrapur, Sidhi, Sarguja, Shahdol, Raigarh, Jhargram, Dhenkanal, etc. were our strongholds. However, excepting some brave spirits like Mamaji, Dineshda and some young friends in Mirzapur and Hoshangabad, we have receded almost everywhere else. The neglect has been twofold: organisational and conceptual. Programmes of constructive activity have been forgotten totally.

But the primary failure has been an inadequate, if not faulty, response to the changing political scenario. Non-Congressism, not in the sense of our rejection of the Congress but our acceptance of all those who also rejected Congress, for whatever reason and for whatever time-span, became a conditioned reflex with us. The policy of equal irrelevance of, and equidistance from, capitalism, communism and communalism was given up, not temporarily but for good. Even now, prominent socialist leaders have not revised that attitude. This today is a seminal question. For, it is impossible to build an ideology-inspired and value-based movement on a negative worldview, and within a promiscuous framework of political alignments. The independence of our movement must reassert itself.

For obvious reasons, most socialists are pursuing, from within their Centrist or Left-of-Centre or socialist formations, anti-Congress and anti-BJP politics. The challenge of communalism, however, is growing compelling the anti-communalists to forge the widest possible unity. While recognising this factor, and even rejecting non-BJPism, we continue to keep quiet when the political formations in which we are partners abet in anti-socialist, economic or environmental policies. Time has come when a bold critique of Centrist politics, and the performances of the governments formed with the active involvement of large numbers of socialists, must be made. That will be an important part of the quest for restoring to our movement its political identity and independence.

Apart from the emergence of activist groups, referred to above, which are working on environmental issues, there are three other non-party tendencies. There are feminist groups. The very fact that there is but a sprinkling of women participants here would show the need to get inspiration from them. In any case, no egalitarian movement can claim relevance if it is so primarily dominated by males as we find where socialists congregate. Then there are Dalit groups who refuse to join even the assertive leaders who spearhead social justice agitations in mainstream politics. If the socialists could build on the Asoka Mehta-Ambedkar alliance or the correspondence between Ambedkar and Lohia, particularly during the centenary celebrations of Baba Saheb, we could identify with them. But we failed. Finally, civil liberties groups are there, most of them with old and powerful radical Marxist-Leninist connections. They are in search for an independent radical platform. While our mutual contact points have always remained, sustained dialogue has never been attempted. The need is that all Marxists, radicals, Gandhians and socialists should start such a dialogue. ■

Challenge and Response

GEORGE FERNANDES

An unprecedented situation faces the Indian people today. A minority government ensconced in Delhi is determined to change the course of India's economic development by pursuing a policy of so-called globalisation of the Indian economy which is an euphemism for serving the interests of the elite three per cent of the population while the overwhelming mass of people are condemned to a life of hopelessness and despair. The years of profligate spending by the elite of borrowed money from overseas has made India the third most indebted nation in the world with indications that the turn of the century may see it as the most indebted country. The new economic policy—a consequence of the profligate decade beginning from 1980—will further hit the already poor and destitute sections of the people. Industrial closures and retrenchments are adding to the numbers of the unemployed, while the multinationals which have been given the free run of the country will siphon off our money that would have provided investment to create new jobs. The cottage and the rural sectors which provided employment second only to agriculture are being killed with the handloom weavers numbering over one crore not finding even a passing reference in the Budget speech of the Finance Minister. And Indian agriculture is sought to be destroyed through the instrumentality of the GATT.

The Congress party has taken encouragement to pursue these anti-people policies as such because of the support it has received for them from the BJP and some other sections of the Opposition in Parliament which enables it to go ahead with them without fear of being thrown out of office. The division in the Opposition is the direct result of the moves of the BJP to make a bid for power through a cynical exploitation of religion, and a hate campaign towards the religious minorities, particularly towards the Muslims. By equating patriotism and nationalism with *Hindutva*, the BJP has sought to give a new and perverse meaning to the concept of Indian nationhood, unmindful of the consequences of those distortions to the future of the Indian state.

The demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992 was the inevitable result of a series of developments in Ayodhya beginning with the surreptitious installation of the idols of Infant Ram in the Babri Masjid on December 22-23, 1949, through a criminal conspiracy in which the then District Magistrate of Faizabad was the principal conspirator. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who otherwise made such great fetish about his commitment to the development of scientific temper in the country, chose to turn a blind eye to this act of chicanery on the part of a civil servant who belonged to the Indian Civil Service (ICS) and who later went on to become a member of the Fourth Lok Sabha on the Jan Sangh ticket. While it is a fact that the Jan Sangh during its stints in the Uttar Pradesh Government in 1967-69 and 1977-79 and in the Union Government in 1977-79 did not raise as much as a murmur on the Babri Masjid, it was Nehru's daughter who in 1984 asked the mahants in Ayodhya to start a movement demanding the allocation of the land on which the Babri Masjid stood to construct a temple of Ram.

In 1986 it was the turn of the grandson of Nehru to unlock the Babri Masjid and open it for people to worship the idols of Infant Ram, followed by a clearance to lay the foundation for the temple in 1989, with full awareness that construction of the temple would necessarily mean the demolition of the mosque.

The destruction of the mosque on December 6, 1992 was but the final denouement of what the Congress party had started in 1949 and it is in the fitness of things that P.V. Narasimha Rao should have presided over the government which let this happen.

It may not be important to know whether the Congress Governments in Delhi and the *Sangh Parivar* worked in tandem or on parallel paths to bring the nation's polity to its present unprecedented crisis. What is noteworthy is that it took them four decades and more to create conditions which have put the nation's unity and future at stake. The partition of India and the communal riots that followed it did take a very high toll in human life and caused immeasurable pain and misery to the people. But the trauma of partition was shared by not only the Hindus, but also by those Muslims who refused to accept the two-nation theory propounded by Jinnah and his Muslim League and went on to pay the price of their convictions.

The run-up to the destruction of the Babri Masjid saw a virulent campaign of hatred by the *Sangh Parivar* towards the Muslims not much different from what was unleashed against the Jews in Germany when Adolf Hitler was making a bid for power. The new definition of nationalism being synonymous with *Hindu Rashtra* has in it echoes of the slogan of the exclusivity and superiority of the German race that was given by Hitler. And with it, the *Sangh Parivar* has not only given a new dimension to the two-nation theory of Jinnah, but has, even if vicariously, provided justification to the many insurgencies in different parts of the country

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IT would be simplistic to look at this situation as being merely a clash between the secular and non-secular forces, and then proceed to build a secular platform to take on the non-seculars. Such a perception of the challenge and the response either ignores or brushes aside certain obvious factors. That the Congress and the BJP have common perspectives on economic development. That both have worked in tandem in the long march to demolish the Babri Masjid. And that both have had the same attitude towards the struggle for social justice, in terms of reservations or special opportunity for the undercastes, which was demonstrated with such violence when the Mandal Commission recommendations were implemented by the National Front Government in August 1990, culminating in their joining forces to throw out the government by a vote in Parliament.

And it is not just a coincidence that when the minority Congress Government is rushing through with far-reaching economic changes designed to help the rich at the expense of the poor, the *Sangh Parivar* is doing everything within its power to divert the attention of the people, particularly of the poor, from the short as well as long-term implications of these economic policies. There are good reasons to believe that this is as a result of a covert understanding, if not an outright conspiracy, between the two parties.

For instance, an important thrust of the new economic policy is privatisation of the government and public sectors. The total government and public sector employment in India till March-end 1989 is 184 lakhs, including employment in Central and State Governments, and quasi-government and local bodies. Of these, at least 100 lakhs are employed in services like manufacturing, mining and quarrying, transport and communications, banks, insurance and finance, electricity, gas and water, construction, etc. all of which are now candidates for privatisation. Such privatisation will also reduce employment in public services from the Central to the municipal government level. As the process of privatisation gathers momentum, the biggest casualty will be the undercastes who are today the beneficiaries of job reservations. Since job reservation is necessarily confined to the public sector of industry and public services, the next 10 years may well see the elimination of some 50 to 60 lakh jobs nullifying all the gains of a hundred years of struggle by the undercastes for social justice and dignity.

In the circumstances, to define the unprecedented national crisis as a confrontation between secular and non-secular forces would be to play into the hands of the very forces who have created the crisis. The socialists who are the inheritors of the legacy of the freedom struggle bequeathed by Mahatma Gandhi and refined in the crucible of people's struggles led by the great leaders of the socialist movement, Acharya Narendra Dev, Jayaprakash Narayan, Rammanohar Lohia and Achyut Patwardhan, have a duty cast on them by history to formulate a correct socialist response to the national crisis.

However, for formulation of such a socialist response cannot be an easy proposition. And for several reasons. Firstly, during the last 15 years and more, the socialists have moved away from their heritage and become a part of a political milieu in which ideology and organisation have been at a discount, and populist politics, often bordering on sectarian slogans, has been the rule. The disbanding of the Socialist Party in 1977 was a grave mistake which has cost the country very dearly. For the socialists, the long night of a tragic diaspora has not yet ended, for the simple reason that they have in many respects discarded their legacy and sought easy options, often unprincipled to the point of blurring even their individual identities. In the process, two generations of youth and students have been bypassed, and allowed to fall prey either to some divisive ideology or the other, or to rank opportunism. If socialists as a collective force have ceased to exist, there is no exaggeration in saying that even as a species they are showing signs of extinction.

Secondly, the division of the socialists into various formations has pitted them against each other, individually and collectively, generating acrimony that cannot be conducive to any united response to the national crisis.

Thirdly, the alliances struck with the so-called secular front by some of the formations to which the socialists belong, will come in the way of any effective action by the socialists as a group.

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ONE way of overcoming these hurdles would be to revive the party of socialism. There are presently some socialist groups which function either with the name and constitution of the socialist party or by other names. In their own way, they also symbolise a long-time socialist malaise of splitting into fractions. A new tendency is to believe that merely inserting the word "socialist" as a prefix or suffix is enough to establish the socialist credentials of a party, never mind if the constitution is undemocratic and the programme is status quoist. The gulf between precept and practice has become so wide that even socialist sensitivities have come to be discarded.

A lot more circumspection will, therefore, be needed before socialists can venture to revive the party of socialism. Some old habits will have to be given up, and most of the newly acquired habits will have to be jettisoned. For instance, the constitution and rules of a socialist party must provide for democratic structures and decentralised functioning. Not a constitution where the party leaders who may have hoisted themselves or ridden on other people's shoulders to the top, distribute the nomenclatures of party posts as some kind of largesse for considerations other than the ability of the holder of the office to do justice to it with conviction and with integrity. Party workers from the primary to the national level should be known by their work and not by the visiting cards and letter-heads which they flaunt.

Socialists must also be clear on how they will finance their day-to-day work and their campaigns and struggles and elections. The new political culture prevalent in the country is corrupt to the point where any man with money can own a political party, so dependent have party workers and leaders become on money that is dispensed from Delhi. The nexus between political workers, government officials, contractors and unscrupulous industrialists is such that anyone who does not become a part of it stands to be thrown out of the political network.

APPEAL TO CITIZENS

The outrage at Ayodhya and subsequent events have rudely shaken the foundations of communal amity and threatened the very existence of the modern Indian State.

The paramount need today is to promote awareness of this crisis and secure the commitment of citizens to the ideals of secularism and democracy. Please sign the pledge and retain a copy of the pledge and display it prominently in your home/workplace. The campaign's objective is to collect 2 crore individual pledges over a certain period of time.

You can make photocopies of this pledge and become a volunteer by collecting more signatures for the campaign. At the end of this campaign a public rally should be organised in every town/city where the pledges have been taken.

Pledge

- **I have a dream of a peaceful, united, humane, egalitarian and prosperous India.**
- **I believe that this dream cannot be realised without rooting out communalism from our land.**
- **I pledge myself to preserve and strengthen, India's unity and communal harmony.**
- **I solemnly commit myself to the vow which Gandhiji asked of all Indians:**

"With God as witness, we Hindus and Mohamedans declare that we shall behave towards one another as children of the same parents, that we shall have no differences, that the sorrows of each shall be the sorrows of the other and that each shall help the other in removing them. We shall respect each other's religion and religious feelings and shall not stand in the way of our respective religious practices. We shall always refrain from violence to each other in the name of religion."

Signature ______________ Name ________________

Address ________________________________

_________________________ Date ____________

Issued by: Working Group on Alternative Strategies
Please post the signed pledge to: Editor, *Mainstream*,
F-24, Bhagat Singh Market, New Delhi 110 001.

Membership enrolment, production and sale of literature, organising study circles, and raising funds for the party is no more considered as political activity. Political campaigns and people's struggles have been substituted by grand rallies organised at great cost as much to impress the donor as to overawe the ordinary party worker into accepting a subordinate role. Even political slogans which are meant to inspire and to educate those who mouth them have been replaced by vulgar intonations glorifying individual leaders.

A socialist response to the national crisis will be possible only when the socialists are ready to go back to their roots and recreate the socialist character which marked them out as distinct from any other category of political activists. This will mean political activity at the level of the primary unit—a village or a mohalla in the urban areas—related as much to the battle for bread and jobs and equality of life as to the battle of ideas.

This must be accompanied by reaching out to the youth in educational institutions, in fields and factories, and particularly the unemployed, whose frustration have been exploited by the protagonists of *Hindutva*.

In the absence of an organised socialist movement, new issues and new challenges would have been taken up by the radical youth including women by setting up action groups and other voluntary organistions. These issues pertain to the rights of women and children and against their exploitations; protection of the environment which is being devastated locally and globally by big industry and those who serve its interest; struggles against large dams and other projects which displace hundreds of thousands of people and ravage their lives, even while disturbing the ecological equilibrium; etc. All such groups need to be drawn into the now inevitable struggle against the new economic policies of the government and the nation-destroying activities of the *Sangh Parivar*. ■

Grim Scenario if Dunkel Draft is Accepted

An Interview with Prof Nanjundaswamy

"I am opposed to the very phrase rural India, for if there is any India, it is rural India. In fact the categorisation has to be India and urban India," says Prof M.D. Nanjundaswamy, President of the Karnataka Rajya Ryotha Sangha and presently the 'pivot' of the anti-Dunkel campaign in the country. 'Professor', as he is fondly called by fellow activist, admirers and partymen, speaks with an emphatic certainty that Arthur Dunkel's proposals are only an attempt at universalising the US Trade Special 301 Act through the GATT.

The anti-Dunkel campaign got a shot in the arm with a huge rally of farmers on March 3 in Delhi. Prof Nanjundaswamy's Ryotha Sangha teamed with Chaudhary 'Mahatma' Mahendra Singh Tikait's Bharatiya Kisan Union to provide the necessary teeth for the hitherto academic campaigns against the proposals of the GATT Secretary General Arthur Dunkel for a new international trade and patents' regime. The anti-Dunkelists were delighted to find in Prof Nanjundaswamy a learned scholar, a Professor of Law and also an activist with a huge mass base.

In fact the worth of Karnataka's knowledgeable, erudite and well articulate peasant leader came out in sharp relief when Sharad Joshi, the supremo of the Shetkari Sanghatana of Maharashtra, extended support to the broader thrust of the Dunkel draft proposals. What was till then spoken of and opposed—just as the way imperialism, colonialism and global hegemony were opposed—was for the first time ardently supported by someone. This necessitated an equally equipped peasant leader to rise to safeguard the interest of the farmers. This onerous task Prof Nanjundaswamy has ably taken upon himself.

Getting to see him was difficult as the 'Professor' trebles up as a practising advocate, a fiery legislator and a busy activist. But speaking to him was indeed a delight. We started off with the 'Cargill action' when the Ryotha Sangha activists sneaked into the Cargill office in Bangalore, threw down all the papers from the second floor and burnt them on the street.

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Q: How does breaking the law and hogging the limelight as you did in December last serve the farmers' interests?

Prof: The law was not broken for getting the limelight. It was not done for publicity. If you want to look at it as law-breaking, I would ask you, when Gandhiji burnt the foreign clothes was he breaking a law? What we did was very similar. This was also my reaction when the press described the Cargill action as 'ransacking' the Cargills. I said that the Cargills are here to ransack the country and we are trying to avoid it.

Q: How would you justify your call to drive out all the MNCs from the country?

Prof: All the MNCs must go. Because we are a farmers' organisation, we started with the MNCs trying to enter the agricultural sector, particularly the seed sector. But the Ryotha Sangha has not restricted itself to the problems of the farmers only, because it cannot. We will have to see the entire system in a perspective. With the result, you cannot allow the MNCs to enter other sectors and just try to eliminate them from the agricultural sector; for, they are interlinked.

Q: Are you fashioning it as a contemporary Gandhian model?

Prof: More or less, that is what I said. India is not yet ready for globalisation. It is defnitely not yet ready for liberalisation. That is because we are still to give full education and full employment to our people. And only thereafter can we think of globalisation and liberalisation. That is why, I have been saying that just like what Russia did for a few decades, developing inside an iron curtain, and the way China developed itself behind a bamboo curtain, I would like India to encircle itself with a *khadi* curtain.

Q: What are the grounds on which you oppose the Dunkel proposals?

Prof: Well, first of all, the very concept of intellectual property rights and the concept of patenting itself. Knowledge is nobody's and can never be allowed to become anybody's private property. Knowledge is the product of societal action and as such knowledge belongs to society.

Q: But, sir, the evolution of knowledge and the progress of civilisation were due to the needs of defence and weaponry. In the absence of such a need, don't you see the necessity of commercialising the pursuit of knowledge and further the progress of civilisation?

Prof: Only for plundering you need weapons and it is not necessary that civilisation progresses through plundering. This plundering and colonisation are synonymous. Civilisations can develop and flourish through exchange of knowledge.

Q: As regard intellectual property rights in agriculture, don't you see the possibility of conflicts between farmers and the government?

Prof: Certainly, I wish the Government of India would realise this as early as possible. The direct impact of patenting of seeds in agriculture will be uprooting small farmers from farm holdings. And India is a country of small holders. Within the next five years, nearly 80 per cent of the 75 per cent of Indian population who are farmers will be jobless. They will be uprooted from their occupations. You cannot imagine the magnitude of the law and order problem that the country will be facing. Where will all the uprooted rural population go? They will have nothing to do with the villages and hence, will be forced to come to the cities. I expect an unprecedented law and order problem if the government continues with its present stand.

Q: The Dunkel draft requires that the government buy the buffer stock from the market paying market prices. Would it not improve the sectoral terms of trade in favour of agriculture?

Prof: But who will fix the prices? Once you say the open market, after the liberalised regime comes into being, who will dictate the world prices? They will not be Indian prices of the agricultural products any more. They will be world prices and we will be a part of the world food market. The Cargills will dictate prices in the world food market. And they will manipulate it in such a way that you will have no buffer stocks, being a trader in India also. In addition, I don't think the Government of India is in a position to compete with the Cargills. While the Union Government's budget is Rs 1,20,000 crores, the Cargills' research budget is five times bigger. Leave alone entering the world market, you can see for yourself, the Government of India would be forced out of the domestic food market itself, if the Dunkel draft is accepted.

Q: Wouldn't there be higher prices for agricultural products in domestic markets due to the MNCs entering the market as buyers?

Prof: That's right. But what will be the retail price? It will be much higher than what it is now. And you should know farmers are not just producers, they are also consumers. Whatever higher prices the Cargills give will not be enough for the farmers as consumers because the Cargills will be dictating the retail prices of food and processed food. It will affect not only farmers as consumers, but also other consumers in India. That way the Dunkel draft is not just concerned with the hardships to producers but also to all the consumers.

Q: Doesn't the free trade boost exports of Indian agricultural products?

Prof: You see the paradox of free trade propounded by the GATT. The introduction of minimum import level has required our country to import two per cent of our annual food consumption at the year 1986-88 level. This works out just now to seventy lakh tonnes of food imports whether we need it or not. This import level itself has to be increased to five per cent of our total consumption within another ten years. And there are no restrictions on the MNCs to enter our food trade. With the TRIMs, TRIPs and the provision of cross-retaliation in case of non-accordance, they can monopolise the food trade in India.

Q: Supposing the draft is accepted, what will be the scenario after another five years?

Prof: As it is, crop patterns are not planned in India. The usual trend among the farmers iis to go for a crop that they think will fetch them a better price, namely, cash crops. And when the major thrust becomes growing cash crops, the food situation will worsen in India; and giving more importance to cash crops will lead us to a situation which resulted in the famous Bengal famine. At that time also the emphasis was on export-oriented agriculture, namely, Indigo. Unless otherwise, the entire country will become a Champaran. ■

(Interview by Jairam Raipuria and Byasdeb Dasgupta)

Need for a New Freedom: "Freedom from Foreign Debt"

M.S. RAJAN

Not a week passes nowadays with world financial institutions (particularly the World Bank and the IMF)—and some developed nations too—offering, and India happily acknowledging, huge amounts of loans. There have also been a large number of comings and goings of officials of these institutions to inspect or review India's economic/financial position or review the functioning of our performance in industry, export/import, etc. These ongoing developments are, of course, the inevitable result of the economic liberalisation of Indian economy and the effort to get the latter to merge with global economy.

That these changes of Indian economic policy were unavoidable after the rather limited success of the earlier four decades-old policy is now generally admitted, in official and unofficial circles too. But there is not enough appreciation of the reasons for dismantling this old policy of economic autonomy, a mixed economy of public/private enterprise, of self-reliance, of indigenisation of efforts to pull up the nation from bootstraps—all this even while seeking international cooperation and financial/technological assistance. In the main, the old policy was rooted in the deliberate effort to strengthen the economic foundations of India's policy of non-alignment—for, obviously, the latter has little enduring significance without the former.

The Prime Minister in a recent speech at Tokyo reaffirmed, rather forcefully, India's continuing devotion to the policy and movement of non-alignment. "The pursuit of non-aligned foreign policy (for India) is even more relevant today than ever before...whether there is one bloc or more at a given moment, the urge of a non-aligned country would continue to be to maintain its independence, to take decisions according to its lights, not tagging itself in advance to others." This is as well, for the good of both India and the world community. But the government and the public appear not to be concerned enough about the present economic policy impinging on India's continuing non-alignment, at least in one long-term respect.

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According to a recent estimate, India's indebtedness has already reached $100 billion, that this works out to Rs 3750 per every Indian, and that over 30 per cent of the country's export earnings would go to service this debt annually. It seems, according to the distinguished economist, I.G. Patel (in a little publicised speech at the India International Centre), India is already the third largest debtor among the developing countries. This leaves the burden of repayment to coming generations. Therefore, he urged a new freedom, "freedom from foreign debt", within the next 15-20 years. A "clear explicitly stated and time-bound policy to secure that freedom becomes a matter of the highest priority".

But in vain does one wish that even while announcing acceptance of such huge loans from international financial institutions, the government takes the public into confidence simultaneously, about the measures being taken to ensure repayment of principal and interest within the present generation which is benefiting from these loans. This is essential, not just for economic reasons only, but also for ensuring that India's policy of non-alignment is not subverted by undue economic dependence on external sources. In other words, there is little public evidence of the government being conscious of the implications on foreign policy/relations of India's increasing indebtedness. Indeed, and on the contrary, there is, among students of India's foreign policy/relations, a hunch that by silence or discreet commissions/omissions (more by the former) we might have already entered the slippery path of erosion of our old, loud, public stance of independence of policy/action in international affairs.

It is good that the Government of India has proclaimed our continuing adherence to non-alignment; but it is not good enough unless we continuously demonstrate the practice of the policy by our stand with reference to specific/

concrete current issues.

Some of us might think that India is rather strong economically and otherwise, compared to some Latin American countries (for example, Brazil, Mexico) which are suffering in many ways from acute external indebtedness, but this might turn out to be a self-deception. It is not widely known that the finances of some of them are continually subject to the surveillance of the World Bank/IMF under the political fig-leaf of what is known as the "Broadford Plan"—a prospect no one in this country can stand, irrespective of political/ideological differences. Besides, those Latin American countries have not had even any pretensions to practising political/economic non-alignment or "mixed economy" (like India).

Also, this is not good enough for a country which is proud of the Nehru heritage of foreign policy; equally, it is not so for what is believed by other nations of India being a model nation sincerely practising non-alignment. ■

Indo-US Relations and the Carnegie Report

RAHUL MITTRA

After the fortysecond President of the United States, Bill Clinton, assumed power at the White House a lot of concern has been shown among the people in India and all over the world as to what will be the course of the new government's foreign policy vis-a-vis the rest of the world. India plays an important role in the current debate on what international role the US should assume.

The United State's policy has been profoundly affected by the collapse of the Soviet Union and much has been written about how the end of the Cold War is reshaping American foreign policy. In his inaugural address, the President sought to promote a spirit of renewal and change, needing each other and caring for one another. The demise of the Cold War has seen a decisive shift in emphasis away from national security defined in military terms, away from ideology described by either anti-communist or pro-democracy commitments and away from geopolitical thinking defined by a balance of power; instead priority is given to America's economic interests. This raises apprehensions among a large section of the Indian people that President Clinton may ignore international relations. But Clinton mentioned in his inaugural speech that there is no longer a clear division between what is foreign and what is domestic. In fact in many ways America's economy is the most important aspect of its foreign policy because without a strong economy. America cannot be expected to exercise much authority on the international stage.

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At this point of time, the new landscape outlined by a Carnegie Endowment Report sets out proposals for future US policy and its relations with India. The Carnegie Endowment was established in May 1961 representing a study group of fifty Americans having a role senting a study group of fifty Americans having a role in shaping Indo-US relations from a fairly large cross-section of influential Americans. The Report says that after the end of the Cold War, Indo-US relations have improved also bringing about a change in the US attitude towards Pakistan, not providing military assistance in the 'carefully circumscribed areas'. The Report outlines some recommendations based on certain assumptions, the most important being that India will emerge as a major military and economic force despite what the US does and that given a proper context of improved Indo-US relations, the Indian military power could be harnessed for serving common goals and resolving global problems.

A separate chapter is devoted in the Report to the importance of India titled "Why India Matters", calling for a change in the US policy with regard to India and viewing of the latter as a continental power like Europe. A cooperative or neutral India is seen as a crucial factor in its interest in South Asia and West Asia. A mention is also made to the favourable investment opportunities in India for Western nations. With regard to the issue of environment, three countries—namely, Brazil China and India—are mentioned playing an important role in determining the global environmental policy.

The main recommendation of the Carnegie Report is that the United States should neither prevent India from being a major power nor should help it by adopting a detached view. A mention is made to the departure from the pro-Pakistan tilt implying that the US is now trying to help India. Having artificially inflated Pakistan's power, it should abstain from it now allowing a natural growth. The Report also recommends the meeting between the new President of the United States and the Prime Minister of India. The Carnegie Report mentions the change in the importance of China after the end of the Cold War calling for an even-handed policy towards the Asian countries—chiefly India, China and Japan—which are important countries in the region. The Report also suggests the formal termination of the 1959 mutual security agreement and the avoidance of any action in the subcontinent.

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ON the Kashmir issue, the Report upholds the Simla Agreement as the basis of negotiations and settlement of dispute. But at the same time urges the Indian Government to check human rights violations in the troubled regions of the country like Punjab and Kashmir and giving permission to the International Red Cross to provide assistance in the troubled areas.

Regarding arms sale, the Report recommends no concessional sale, either to India or to Pakistan, and as a corollary to this provides for screening the commercial sales of equipment on a case by case basis so that it does not lead to war between Pakistan and India. It also says that with the demise of the Cold War the strategic importance of Pakistan has been nullified.

In the context of freezing the development of military related capability by both India and Pakistan, the Report suggests that the most effective way to do this would be to bring Pakistan and India into the realm of global treaties like the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The US should press India for risk reduction asking them not to proliferate to other regions. An important recommendation that India should take the pledge to abide by the provision of the NPT, without signing the NPT as done by Argentina and South Africa. The Report makes it clear that India will not give away its nuclear option and also that the United States does not have much credibility in this area. Thus the US should stop pressing India to sign the NPT because it would involve a reversal of a stand now deeply entrenched in the national psyche.

With regard to the missile development programme, the Report mentions the importance of *Agni* and *Prithvi* and holds that the programme is far more advanced than is normally anticipated. It criticises the policy adopted by India with regard to cryogenic engines and persuades India not to transfer rocket technology. A list of countries is given which could be hit by *Agni* if placed in different regions of India. (A mention is also made of the fact that the US would not come in its range.)

In the sphere of Indo-US military cooperation, the Report suggests the extension of joint military exercises to joint training and joint contingency plans without entering into any formal military pact. Recommendations are made in the sphere of ideological and technological cooperation asking the US not to impose conditionalities except in the economic field—no extra-constitutional conditionalities should be brought in by the US. At the same time it calls for starting a dialogue by India within the five-nation equation.

The Carnegie Report underlines economic reforms as the field with greatest potential in the Indo-US equation. It advises the US to follow a more liberal policy towards India and support the Special Drawing Rights of India. It also calls for cooperation in the sphere of science and technology, computers, etc. urging India at the same time to denationalise banks, liberalise foreign agencies and procedures for foreign research scholars in India.

The Report in general has given rise to a lot of optimism with regard to Indo-US relations. But at the same time it is unrealistic to issues of domestic concern like the Kashmir problem and human rights violation. Thus scanning the annals of the history of the two countries in the context of the end of the Cold War it shall be quite evident that a new America is emerging, anxious to respond to the imperatives of the new global economy assuming the role of a mediator rather than world policeman which is a welcome sign in the post-Cold War era. It remains to be seen how the Indian leadership asserts itself in the realm of international relations carving out a positive role for itself. ■

BOOK REVIEW

Profile of Working Journalists' Struggles

JAG MOHAN

It is in the fitness of things that this valuable book by a veteran "working" journalist has been published at the present juncture. During the past few years, the Indian working journalists' movement has faded in public memory and there are few references to it even in the Press. The acronym IFWJ, which at one time symbolised the valiant struggle put up by the members of the Indian Federation of Working Journalists for their place under the Indian sun, is almost unknown to the journalists of the younger generation these days. (This is no place to go into the whys and wherefores of this minor tragedy or to apportion blame on anybody.)

On the other hand, let us be thankful to Jagdish Prasad Chaturvedi for having compiled out of his writings over the last half century, a fairly coherent history of the working conditions of journalists and the persistent efforts made by him and his band of worthy colleagues to improve them and to endow the journalists their just rights and dignity.

Indian Press at the Crossroads by J.P. Chaturvedi; Media Research Associates, New Delhi; 1992; pp. 432; Rs 400.

As the former President of India, R. Venkataraman, has mentioned in his foreword to the book (written while he was still resident at the Rashtrapati Bhavan), Chaturvedi "has thought, planned, organised, lobbied and campaigned for the rights of working journalists with single-minded devotion". The ex-President has further added, he himself was involved in the movement right from the days of the first Parliament of which he was a member and later represented journalists in the first Working Journalists' Wage Board.

Chaturvedi entered the profession in the early forties, having joined *Maya* and *Manohar Kahaniya,* and was active in the all-India Hindi Patrakar Sangh and in the States' Peoples' Freedom Movement as well. (Subsequently he has been with *the Navbharat Times* in its early days, *Aaj* and a news agency.) His elder contemporaries were stalwarts like Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi and Banarsidas Chaturvedi, M. Chalapathi Rau and K. Rama Rao, Rana Jang Bahadur Singh and G.N. Acharya. (Strange, these names have been forgotten now.)

In those halcyon days Jawaharlal Nehru was our Prime Minister and long before he became "the first public servant of the nation", he was an active journalist and the founder of the *National Herald.* He knew personally the working conditions of journalists under the British and in the early days of our independence. Nehru's ears were attuned to the comments and advice of K. Rama Rao and M. Chalapathi Rau, the "twin Raos", who edited the *National Herald.* They had a perspective of the Fourth Estate in India. "MC" played a definitive role in the qualitative transformation of the working conditions of journalists.

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CHATURVEDI has rescued several valuable articles he had written in various journals for this book and they provide the step-by-step history of the movement—the formation of the IFWJ out of the various regional associations, the setting up of the First and Second Press Commissions, the passing of the Working Journalists' Act, the first appointments to their Wage Board and so on. These were landmarks in the history of the Indian Press. They entailed enormous work in terms of correspondence, discussions, controversies and even definitions. (For instance, the newspaper proprietors disputed the inclusion of proof-readers under the term "working journalists".)

Chaturvedi was here, there and everywhere in those days and he had established excellent rapport with his colleagues in the movement—Mrinal Kanti Bose and S.A. Sastry, A. Raghavan and C. Raghavan, S.B. Kople and T.R. Ramaswami—all of whom had a passionate identification with the IFWJ. It was their collective endeavour that did so much good to the movement. Their efforts have not been wasted even though the IFWJ has been passing through a bad patch in recent times.

It is to the credit of Chaturvedi that he has dealt with several aspects of Indian journalism like the Indian Language Press and the Press Council, the determination of minimum wages for journalists and security of service, emerging technologies and monopoly trends in ownership, problems of the medium and small newspapers and the price-page schedule. Having had opportunities of travelling extensively within and outside India, Chaturvedi had obviously benefited from contacts with foreign journalists and international institutions. This becomes evident in the book.

The last section of the book is devoted to "Documents", a perusal of which will enable all those interested in the subject to gain a correct perspective. Fortunately, he has included an index and this book can be used as a source of reference. As the ex-President R. Venkataraman has observed, this book is to be commended "for its wealth of detail as much for the width of its vision".

One wishes that Chaturvedi includes in the next edition of the book a postscript about the hazards and pressures faced by journalists from the militants and the goonda elements among the fundamentalists. Maybe a note on the print and electronic media is also appended. These would enhance the value of the book further. ■

The Electronic Media

MODHUMITA MOJUMDAR

Whatever be the real reason for it, keeping the electronic media under the control of the government is officially stated as necessary in order to instil the right kind of values in our men, women and children. Indeed, of late there have been some expcellent spots promoting national integration as well as the rights of women and children over both Doordarshan and All India Radio. Yet, as is typical of the various Ministries and departments of the government, people seem to be working at cross-purposes even in DD and AIR. There are also other aims, such as helping farmers with the right kind of knowledge regarding farming and animal husbandry, promoting education and the proper scientific temper among the people, domestic harmony and, finally, contributing to the appreciation of the arts and the diverse cultures of this vast land.

However, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting does not seem to bother about all these aspects and is happy as long as DD and AIR carry the right kind of political messages in their news bulletins and news-based programmes. Messages that uphold the viewpoint of the government—no matter how inept it is. We also have a Department of Culture, but it does not appear to interact with DD and AIR or contribute to the overall improvement of the software. So we have the vulgar and trite programmes based on *filmi sangeet*, not only over AIR but also almost endlessly over DD which also provides the visuals of the hero chasing the heroine who gyrates amidst flowering shrubs and tree trunks and virtually invites the young man to rape her.

Indeed, some years ago a woman friend of mine who visited the bird sanctuary in Bharatpur and had gone out for a walk in the woods was molested and nearly raped by some local college students. She escaped unharmed because these boys were almost jollying her to the act—Hindi film style. Surely the Department of Culture of the Government of India could persuade DD to stop showing the *Chitrahaar* and *Chitramala* programmes which mostly project women as nothing other than sexual objects. Even the afternoon programme of DD, meant mainly for women, children and elder citizens, show such song sequences.

Far worse than this are the so-called educative and ennobling programmes put out by the electronic media. I switch on the TV at 1 PM when the UGC puts out its countrywide classroom programme—which is perhaps the only thing worth watching. For inexplicable reasons, this hour-long programme is not announced in the evening announcements for the next day's programme. After this comes the programme of telling drab stories meant to teach children and mothers-in-law about the evil effects of dowry or that strength lies in unity and such message spots which are neither good entertainment nor sound and intelligent discussions on various social evils. There is usually a session on fancy cookery using the most expensive of ingredients and the most elaborate of processes. It would be far more useful to teach people (not necessarily women alone) simple recipes that would enable them to cook tasty and nutritive dishes without spending too much money or too much time. It is indeed strange that the cooks demonstrating the process of making these rarified dishes are inveriably women. In this day and age when diabetes and heart diseases are on the rise, tasty food suited to people on a strict dietary regimen would, one feels, be far more useful.

Then, there are the instructions (whether these are meant for children or their mothers, I have never been able to make out) to prepare "decorative" things that can best be described as kitsch. This time could be spent much better by instilling an appreciation for good arts and crafts. But then, even the evening programmes on the second channel, which frequently make forays into art exhibitions, usually avoid the better exhibitions. This is also true of AIR where the worst possible artists are interviewed by those with no proper appreciation of painting or sculpture. Elderly women, living on the meagre pensions of their retired husbands are told to grow flowers for the market (without telling them where and how to sell them) or to make pickles or stitch clothes (all extensions of the kind of domestic chores that women are expected to do) in order to supplement the family budget.

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WHILE we talk of national integration, programmes meant for farmers and rural women invariably being with the greeting "Ram Ram"—as though all villages are inhabited with *Ram bhaktas*—thereby alienating minority communities such as the Muslims and Sikhs. In the *Ghar Sansar* programme over AIR the other day, much was said in favour of village libraries. However, for the sake of the village women, cookery books and books on sewing were the only ones suggested while it was definitely said that children should not be allowed access to entertaining books but only to biographies of great men and other ennobling books. *Krishi Jagat* too completely ignores women although, even traditionally, women contribute much labour in the spheres of agriculture, animal husbandry and in basket-making, rope-making, pottery and other works, albeit as helpers to their husbands who take the credit of being artisans. Children too contribute in all these enterprises. However, whether it is the storage of grains or looking after poultry, women, who traditionally do such jobs (often with the help of their children), are competely ignored in the farmers' programmes produced and presented by DD and AIR.

One would have thought that after the BJP and its allies having committed the vandalism in Ayodhya in the name of Ram Lalla (how Ram Chandra overnight turned into Ram Lalla is more than what I can comprehend) the State-owned and government-controlled electronic media would go a bit slow on Ram, and also on Krishna, given the BJP's demand to demolish the mosques in Mathura and Varanasi. However, AIR's *Vandana* programme and other devotional music programmes seem to comprise entirely on songs about Ram, with Krishna thrown in for good measure. Whether it is the Martyrs' Day or the weekly morning programme dedicated to Gandhi, the Mahatma, every Friday songs on Ram seem to be the mainstay. Indeed, one does not get to hear the song, *Ram Rahim Krishna Karim,* any longer over either DD or AIR let alone the recitations from all the religions and hymns composed by Tagore or those from the vast musical repertoire of the Christians and Sikhs all of which figure in the *Ashram Bhajanavali* with a foreword by Gandhi. On top of all this there is the morning Brajmadhuri and Bhakti programme over AIR every morning which too is strong on Hinduism and Hindu idioms. Surely this counters all that our leaders say about secularism and national integration. It would be far more fruitful if religious music, hymns and litturgies from all the religions were broadcast by turn.

In may childhood, the Friday morning programmes in the name of Gandhi used to broadcast excerpts from his addresses in his own voice, which carried conviction. It is a shame that this practice has been discontinued and Ram *bhajans* take its place and even the readings from Gandhi's writings are by crisp, professional voices which do not carry conviction. At a quiz programme over DD sometime ago, the young participants failed to recognise Gandhiji's voice—although, given the priorities of our electronic media, I am sure that they would have had no problem recognising Nehru's voice. ■

Kashmir turned into a Land of Martyrs

INDER MOHAN

The people of the Kashmir State have always enjoyed the reputation of being peaceful, secular and democratic. Today they are faced with unprecedented terrorism, intense suffering and are making sacrifices for the principles they have long cherished. They are victims of unlimited and unaccountable powers conferred upon the so-called security forces of India, Pakistan and the State Government itself. There are several terrorist groups operating, most of them created by the establishments of India and Pakistan, meant to terrorise the self-respecting and politically conscious people of Kashmir into submission and thus justify their inhuman atrocities inflicted upon the people. These groups, without any following among the people, are heavily armed and the people do understand which powers back such groups and why.

The people of Kashmir have categorically refused to accept the coercive domination of either the Indian or Pakistani rulers. Moreover, they are capable of differentiating between the peoples of India and Pakistan from their respective establishments. That is why they have decided to ally themselves with those people in the subcontinent who are bravely struggling for their basic human and regional rights.

How did events came to such a pass? A brief background may explain this. The Kashmir State comprises of three regions:

1) The Kashmir Valley where ninetyfive per cent of the population are Muslims, nearly three per cent are Pandits (Hindus), and the remaining two per cent are Christians and Sikhs.
2) The Jammu region where there are 61 per cent Hindus and Sikhs, and 39 per cent are Muslims.
3) The Ladakh region where there are 51 per cent Buddhists and 49 per cent Muslims.

When the subcontinent was partitioned into India and Pakistan, the people of Kashmir willingly opted for accession to India and not for Pakistan, which became a theocratic state. Since then Pakistan has been stubbornly claiming that the Valley, in any case, should have been a part of Pakistan because of its overwhelming Muslim population. To this end, Pakistan preferred to resort to three wars against India—in 1947, in 1965 and in 1971. Every time because of the people of the Kashmir State, Pakistan failed to succeed.

The author, a veteran human rights activist, is the President, Indian People's Human Rights Commission.

But today the same secular people of Kashmir not only equate the establishments of India and Pakistan, but are determined to remain free from the coercive domination of both. The people of all the three regions of the Kashmir State fully understand as to why Pakistan has been resorting to brutal repression against the people of all its four States of Baluchistan, Sindh, North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Punjab, because they have been fighting relentlessly for their socio-economic human rights and recognition of their respective regional rights and identities based on a truly federal system. Similar movements have been growing from strength to strength in the different States of India and the Indian establishment too has been striving in vain to suppress them through inhuman atrocities.

The people of the entire Kashmir State also realise that fundamentalist religious forces (communal foces) have become a serious menace to India's social fabric by openly assuming a fascist character.

Besides, both India and Pakistan have been patronising mafia gangs to disrupt and terrorise popular movements in their respective countries. Other anti-people common practices encouraged by the Indian and Pakistani establishments has been rampant corruption, commercialisation and dehumanisation of their politics.

The people of Kashmir know that basic human rights are violated by both the establishments in a calculated manner with impunity and all talk of official human rights commissions, etc. are actually meant to impress and mislead the foreign countries from which they procure substantial financial aid.

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THE deprived, the unemployed and the exploited ones in India and Pakistan compise an overwhelming majority of the population, perpetually suffering from artificially created socio-economic disparties. Only the power-wielders and their henchmen in different spheres live in comfort and luxury as they have successfully cornered all the benefits resulting from the development projects in the two countries.

In such circumstances, the well aware Kashmiri people want to have a government of their own choice based on truly federal rights and democracy starting from the grassroots level. They will never accept a puppet government imposed by any highly centralised establishment. Any other so-called solution paraded by India or Pakistan is, as a matter of fact, based on possession of territory of the Kashmir State rather than any genuine concern for the people's basic rights.

The people of Kashmir have been steeled because of the savage barbarities perpetrated on them through mass killings, mass humiliation of women, inhuman raids on residential areas in villages, small towns, lanes and bylanes of cities, scorching of their abodes and shops, numerous deaths in police custody, floating dead bodies of youths found in river Jhelum killed in fake encounters, thousands languishing in jails without trials and being tortured by third degree methods.

Amidst all this the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) has emerged as the most popular organisation in the Valley in particular, being primarily opposed to the domination of India or Pakistan. The JKLF stands for the return of all those Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims who had migrated from the Valley due to the disturbed conditions and thus to unitedly fight for the Kashmiri identity and regional rights. Through this step, the JKLF aims at restoring the inherent peaceful and secular atmosphere in the entire State. The JKLF further stands for equal regional rights including administrative, economic and political, for the people of Jammu and Ladakh regions which had so far been denied to them. This step can certainly counter the communal forces operating in Jammu and Ladakh at the behest of both the Indian and Pakistani administrations. The JKLF stands against terrorism, especially state terrorism, which has been the real source of all other forms and groups of terrorism. The JKLF has been consistently exposing the officially sponsored terrorist groups meant to create trouble and justify official oppression.

Today it is a reality that the people of the Kashmir State are completely alienated from the Indian or Pakistani establishment. They are solidly behind the JKLF. Another pro-Pakistan splinter organisation known as Hizbul-Mujahidin, though heavily armed has failed to win over the people on religious grounds. The JKLF is aware of the fact that despite their loud and prolonged hostilities, both the establishments of India and Pakistan have arrived at a secret understanding to curb the activities of the JKLF and its followers. At the same time, much to the chagrin of Pakistan, sizable sections of Hizbul-Mujahidin are shifting over to the JKLF.

In this situation, the JKLF, through its alliance with the struggling people of India and Pakistan, aims at creating a lasting bridge of peace in the subcontinent. Alas, there is no statesman in the subcontinent who could recognise such a positive role!

It is in this context that the gruesome, cold-blooded and selective assasinations of H.N. Wanchoo on December 5, 1992, Dr Farooq Ashai on February 19, 1993, and above all of Dr A.A. Guroo on March 31, 1993, have to be viewed. All these three were popular with the people and specialists in their respective spheres. H.N. Wanchoo was a scholar, an authority on Kashmir's history and a successful non-party trade unionist. Dr Farooq Ashai was a well known bone-specialist. Dr A.A. Guroo was an equally well known heart specialist. All these three were committed human rights activists and supporters of the JKLF. In short, their overall popularity resuted in their brutal murders. The Indian and Pakistani establishments cannot absolve themselves of connivance in these dastardly acts. So far the Indo-Pak establishments have been thriving on disinformation. But for how long? The people are fully aware of the reality. ■

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Inder Mohan on Kashmir

I read the first part of Inder Mohan's piece on Dr Farooq Ashai (*Mainstream*, April 17) with deep anguish and a sense of remorse and shame as an Indian. But the second part of his passionate article equally deeply shocked and surprised me. My forefathers came from Kashmir and in the good old days my late father, Autar Lal Bakaya, was editor of the monthly journal *Bahar-e-Kashmir,* published by the Kashmiri Pandits' Asosciation from Lahore. I do not know if Inder Mohan would remember me, but I know him well. I was a back-bencher in the Lahore Students' Union when luminaries like Rajbans Khanna, Mazhar Ali Khan and the 'two Inders' (I.K. Gujral and Inder Mohan) and many others were leaders of the student movement, for whom I had the greatest admiration. One of my classmates and friends in the Forman Christian College in Lahore was Randhir Singh 'Josh', as he then called himself, and who later distinguished himself as Prof Randhir Singh, one of the most popular teachers of Political Science in Delhi University. It has greatly saddened me to learn that Inder Mohan has suffered a paralytic stroke and I sincerely wish him speedy and complete recovery. I read his moving tribute to Mazhar Ali Khan in the April 3 issue of your journal. It brought back nostalgic memories of our youthful dreams—dreams which turned into nightmares when our land was partitioned in August 1947. A little over two decades later Bangladesh split away from Pakistan. These splits left hundreds of thousands dead and millions homeless.

The Kashmiris, both Muslims and Hindus, have contributed more than their share to India's freedom struggle and its culture. Suffice it to mention such famous names as Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru, Tej Bahadur Sapru and Hriday Nath Kunzru among the Pandits and Saifuddin Kitchlew and Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah among the Muslims. Poet Iqbal, who gave us our national song *"Sare Jahan se achcha"* was a Kashmiri and so was Ratan Nath Sarshar who laid the foundations of the Urdu novel towards the end of the last century. Today Kashmir has become a Valley of Tears where Kashmiri Muslims have become alienated from the rest of India while many Kashmiri Pandits have been forced to leave their homeland and become ethnic refugees.

I think Inder Mohan would be more effective in the defence of human rights in Kashmir if he does not take a partisan position on Kashmiri politics. Whatever may be the present position in Jammu and Kashmir, I think most Indians would accept the following *facts:* 1) On August 15, 1947 at the time of the partition of India, the Maharaja of Kashmir had entered into a standstill agreement with India and Pakistan to maintain the *status quo* pending further negotiations. However, Pakistan invaded Kashmir and forced the Maharaja, supported by the National Conference, to sign the Instrument of Accession to India on October 26, 1947. Within less than a week Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah became Head of the Emergency Administration in Kashmir. The Indian army then entered Kashmir and with the support of the people drove out the Pakistanis from the major portion of the State occupied by them. The ceasefire imposed by the UN, however, ended in J & K being virtually divided, with considerable territory under Pakistan's illegal occupation. 2) The Indian Constitution, which came into force on January 26, 1950, gave a privileged position to Kashmir. Act 370 of the Constitution limits the Indian Parliament's powers over Kashmir to defence, foreign affairs and communications. 3) A Constituent Assembly, elected on the basis of universal adult franchise, framed a Constitution for J & K, *ratified* the accession of the State to India and abolished hereditary rulership in the State, apart from ratifying the transfer of land to the tillers without compensation. The monarchical order was formally terminated in November 1952 in pursuance of the Constitutent Assembly's decision. (The 'Naya Kashmir' Constitution in those days evoked great enthusiasm not only in Kashmir but among progressives all over India.)

The imperialist powers, however, continued to intrigue through their hold on the UN while Russia (under Stalin) failed to take the unequivocal position which it began to take after the visit to India of Bulganin and Khrushchev in November-December 1955. The story of Kshmir until 1952 was told in an interesting book by Rajbans Khanna, a close friend of Inder Mohan in his Lahore days, who had taken an active part in Kashmir's fight against Pakistani and imperialist designs.

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IT is not possible here to go into the sad history of Kashmiri politics after this period, nor is it necessary, as the constitutional position of J & K was settled by the adoption of the Indian Constitution in 1950 and the ratification of Kashmir's accession to India by the Constituent Assembly of J & K in 1951. Secessionist movements have been active in many parts of India at different times. What makes the position of Kashmir more difficult is the occupation of a part of the State's territory by Pakistan, *de facto* dividing the State into two parts and *armed support* given to the Kashmiri militants by Pakistan. Pakistan has tried the same tactics earlier in relation to the Khalistani secessionists as well, but the myths of 'Sikh psyche' and alienation have been dispelled during a single year of an elected government in Punjab, even though it was put in power by only ten per cent of the electorate. In Kashmir the position is more complicated because of Pak claims on J & K and the misuse of religion in a Muslim-majority State by the pro-Pak militant outfits like the Hizbul Mujahideen.

Inder Mohan completely identifies himself with the JKLF and goes to the extent of saying that but for his illness "I would have been in Kashmir fighting shoulder to shoulder with the people under the secular and democratic guidance of the JKLF". It is strange that though the JKLF is admittedly an armed organisation, Inder Mohan does not realise the inconsistency of his position when he says: "I have been a militant without ever believing in violence or terrorism."

It is not my intention either to deny the alienation of the people of Kashmir or the violation of human rights by the highly isolated and hence nervy security forces there. But this is not a problem confined to Kashmir. Violation of human rights cannot be fought by supporting an illegal armed organisation which is responsible to no one. Inder Mohan naively believes that the JKLF can solve the problem, forgetting that there are others like the Hizbul Mujahideen active in Kashmir with Pakistan's support. Moreover, if the JKLF is both against India and Pakistan, it would not be allowed to function from Pak-occupied territory and organise marches across the LAC from there. One has not heard of the JKLF carrying out any armed struggle in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

The recent history of many countries, including Afghanistan, Yugoslavia and many regions of the former USSR, has shown that ethnic conflicts cannot be settled in the present-day world by armed force. The bankruptcy and opportunism of the traditional parties—the Akalis and Congress in Punjab and the National Conference and Congress in Kashmir—caused a vacuum of power which secessionist forces have sought to take advantage of with open support from across the border. The Opposition leaders in India, regrettably, have shown no better record. When it suited them, they made use of several State leaders, some of whom are no longer with them. Recall the Opposition 'conclaves' some years ago, which were regularly attended by Farooq Abdullah, Sharad Pawar and others. The Indian Constitution gives more autonomy to Kashmir than to any other State and the Constitution does not stand in the way of the States exercising autonomy. Inder Mohan uses the ambiguous term 'regional freedom' without defining what it means, unless he equates it with the right to secede. The secession of Kashmir would be a grievous blow to secularism not only in J & K (no significant non-Muslim section of the population supports JKLF), but to India as a whole. Inder Mohan quotes Gandhiji's 'Quit India' call, but forgets that military intervention after Kashmir's accession to India, in M. Chalapathi Rau's words, was "blessed by the Mahatma, who saw no issue of non-violence or violence in it and who never considered cowardice to be non-violence". (In *Jawaharlal Nehru*, p. 328)

It would be better if Inder Mohan and many of us joined together to defend human rights in Kashmir and elsewhere, from whichever quarter they are threatened, without declaring support to armed secessionist organisations. The exercise to get the 'political process' going in Kashmir, however difficult, must be undertaken. Otherwise Kashmir will continue to be destroyed by violence.

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Secularism and Social Transformation in India—III

RASHEEDUDDIN KHAN

The author, a former Member of the Rajya Sabha, is the Director, Indian Institute of Federal Studies, New Delhi. He is a former Professor of Political Science, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He presented the following position paper at a seminar organised sometime ago by the Social Affairs Group of the India International Centre, New Delhi. It is being published in three instalments with a view to generate discussion on the issues raised. The first and second parts appeared in the Mainstream *issues of April 24, 1993 and May 1, 1993. This is the concluding part.* —Editor

VII: The Implications of the terms Secularism and Secular Polity in European Experience and in the Indian Context

The term Secularism has been subjected in India, by the academic experts specially, and the intelligentsia generally, to needless scrutiny, in terms of its meaning and implication. The fact is that every term indeed has three different meanings—literal, historical and contemporary. These three meanings—namely in terms of etymology (that is, linguistic roots), historical connotation (that is, based on different uses put to it over the centuries and in different countries) and contemporary meaning (that is, current common usage)—may not be, and indeed are rarely, identical to each other. A classic example is of the term Democracy. Aristotle, if resurrected, would be terrified to realise that Democracy is being advocated as one of the ideals for a good and just society!

There are, however, two valid objections to the term secularism, by the detractors, the nit-picking critics, and even the well-meaning objective analysts. One is that the term is heavily overlaid by its European/Western connotation, of 'separation of Church from the State', and the 'separation of the School from the Church'. Hence it is ethno-centric in its historical context and relevance, and therefore cannot be universalised, obviously due to the diversity of social and religious traditions in the world. The second objection is that the suffix 'ism' gives it a dogmatic veneer and an orientation of unquestioned certitude, and thus transforms it from a worthy ideal into a rigid doctrine. Both the objections are indeed valid, if one is taking too literal a view of the terms secular and secularism and perceive them only within the straitjacket of West European experience.

Secularism as a term, used freely in public discourse in India, implies a concept and process that seeks to change a traditional society into a modern polity, by emphasising certain values and norms of civic life and political culture. It has both a negative and a positive connotation.

In its negative connotation secularism implies, for instance, a process which is *opposed* to: i) domination of religion in politics; ii) building a mono-religious state structure (like, for instance, Islamic Republic, Buddhist state, *Hindutva*, etc.); iii) the idea of a theocratic or quasi-theocratic state controlled and directed by a religious community; iv) discrimination between the religious segments in society, state and government for purposes of civic life, and in the political system and in the making of constitution, laws, rules and procedures, etc.; iv) counterposing religious identities to the unified national identity; vi) fragmentation of the citizens into exclusive electoral constituency, based on ascriptive grounds of sects, tribes, caste, religious community, etc.

Positively, secularism means the following: i) recognition of religion and beliefs as personal and devotional aspects of life; ii) affirmation of equal respect to all religions and belief systems; iii) promotion of understanding, harmony and cooperation between different religious segments for national unity and integration; iv) assertion of the supremacy of state and its laws equally for all citizens; v) liberation of the civic polity from religion-dominated groups and parties; vi) enforcement of the common civil laws, made and modified by elected representatives of the citizens; vii) recognition of equality of status and opportunity for all citizens irrespective of caste, colour, creed, gender or any other basis of primordial discrimination; and ix) enforcement of the principle of fraternity of the citizens as *citizens* and not members of primordial groups—religious, linguistic, ethnic or regional.

Since there is no organised Church in India of the two major religious segments, constituting the Hindu and Muslim population, accounting for about 94 per cent of the people, the basic question of the separation of the Church from the State, as the guiding principle of secularism, as was the case in Western civilisation, does not arise. In Western Europe it was the question of horizontal segregation of the State from the Church, because the emergent secular state was to be emancipated from an organised church which had for centuries usurped the powers and prerogatives of a State. In India, due to our own pecular religious background, belief system and historical demands, consequent on the emergence of an independent state in the wake of the success of the national liberation movement, the question is of vertical segregation between the newly constituted republican democratic state, and the many segments of primordial loyalties based on caste, religion, language, region, etc. In brief, in India it is the basic question of the supremacy of state power in civic, social and political affairs of the newly liberated people who were earlier fragmented in their basic loyalties to their respective groups and to their concerned feudal principalities.

In a word, Secularism in India means, and ought to mean, the supremacy of State, as the terminal point of political loyalty, over and above all other focii of loyalties, no less and no more. In the West, secularism emerged in the process of struggle between feudal political authority and the traditional Catholic Church which exercised political hegemony. In India, and in most of the Third World countries, secularism as a phenomenon represents a struggle for building an integrated political community, in a multi-religious situation. Our struggle for secularism is against religious separatism, religious bigotry and religious belligerency that seeks to divide our national unity and political solidarity. It is a struggle against the processes of fragmentation of our integrity and community as a sovereign people. It is an assertion of a new legitimacy of a multi-religious plural society, seeking to respect all religions, yet refusing to be dominated in its political culture by anyone or all of them. Thus here is a wide difference in the historical context and social situation, and therefore in the nature of challenges to a secular polity, between the Western Europe of the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, and in India and the Third World countries in the twentieth century.

VIII: Two Traditions in All Religions

There are two competing traditions in each religious system, namely, the *orthodox* tradition and the *humanist* tradition. The orthodox tradition enjoins attachment to dogma and rituals. It is conformist in its orientation, and lends itself to rigidity of belief, bigotry in propogation of the faith, intolerance of deviation and dissent, promotion of militancy among the faithful and belligerency towards other belief-systems. The humanist tradition, on the other hand, is heterodox, pluralistic, fairly open and broadly accommodative of varied orientations and divergent interpretations.

The orthodox tradition emphasises the exclusive, even superior, nature of each religion. It has a history of recurrent efforts at 'purification' and 'fundamentalisation' of religious belief and practices, of 'revivalism' of myths, legends and heroic images of the past. It has a tradition of the total rejection of other beliefs and faiths. It is not surprising, therefore, to perceive a 'totalitarian' approach to religion and society in the orthodox tradition. As an extension of this 'holistic' approach, the orthodox tradition has continuously exhibited its predeliction to play a political role, a power-game, a hegemonistic impulse to dominate the devout, their groups, and society at large, cultural institutions, and exclude 'the others', the 'infidels', the '*mlecchhas*', the 'outsiders', call them what you will.

The humanist tradition in all religions underline commonality of approach of several aspects of social life. It lays stress on individuel moral code. It propagates universal ethical norms for common welfare. It promotes the values of love and compassion in human life. It seeks to build bridges of understanding between diverse religious traditions, by identifying similarities of images and values, despite divergences in nomenclautre. It projects the basic values of life and happiness for all, adherence to truth, goodness, justice, fairplay, toleration, mutual respect and accommodation of dissent. It seeks to transcend dogma by asserting the basic fraternity of the human species. It uses moral exhortation to influence human consciousness. It speaks of God as a universal God, of religion as a humanistic endeavour, of society as a common responsibility.

It points out to the futility of doctrinaire disputation and dogmatic fights, and extols the lasting benefit of the values of 'live and let-live', of plurality of perception but unification of human goodness and concern for all. The Sufi tradition in Islam, and the Bhakti tradition in different parts of India are examples of this heritage.

The humanist tradition promotes religiosity but not formal religion. One must make a distinction between formal, habitual and bigoted attachment to organised religion, and the mystic and ethical individual sense of religiosity. A widespread adherence to religiosity is apparent in the common people, most of whom due to lack of systematic scientific education and enlightenment are not entirely committed to rationalism and scientific temper. The impact of religion in its many varied manifestations has percolated in different shapes and forms in various parts of the world, even in this age and time of massive scientific and technological revolution. The deep social, moral and cultural roots of religion in almost all civilisations make it an integral, even unconscious, habitual and primordial part of human existence. It is an invariable influence, and a 'given' factor of collective life. Such a deeprooted factor is susceptible of use and misuse by the power elite, especially in an age of mass mobilisation for politics and universal electoral participation in a democracy for legitimisation of power and authority. And this is happening in different shapes and forms in various parts of the world, especially in the developing countries marked by rampant poverty, illiteracy, low political consciousness, competing party system, and high profile of religious identity as a significant sub-stratum of a new nation-building process.

IX: Secularism and Composite Nationalism

Now let us focus attention on the process of secularisation of the polity for socio-economic transformation.

The process of modernised federal nation-building in India depends particularly on three major engines of change: democracy, secularism, and social justice. In a simplistic formulation one might add that they respectively are conceived as the main instruments of gigantic change in the political, social, and economic transformation of our continental polity.

Democracy is expected to transform the political ethos of new India by inducting into the processes and the structures of the polity the many segments and groups most of whom had hitherto remained outside the purview of *political acitivity*. By universal politicisation of the Indian citizens, democracy is expected to promote mass mobilisation and participation for stabilising the foundations of a new political culture in this ancient land. Naturally against the background of India's social composition and sociological foundations of its politics democracy acquires the characteristics of being both a response and a challenge. It is a response to the exploitation, decades of colonial rampage and maladjustments, and the overall heritage of 'sanctified' social inequality implicit in the caste system, economic stagnation, political hierarchy and autocracy. It is a challenge and an intervention for building a new edifice for the future, based on equality, liberty, justice, and fraternity, coalescing the world's most complex and diverse plural society into political integration and national solidarity. It is for this reason that democracy with social justice has been the main slogan of national political will, the operative principle of our new political system, the universally recognised major premise of all our socio-economic development.

Secularism in India theoretically meant three things: (i) the rejection of the quasi-theocratic state form like that of Pakistan, and the affirmation of a non-religion-based democracy; (ii) the proclamation that religion is of private or group concern; and (iii) the assertion of the unity of the people of India and the inalienable equality of all citizens of the republic irrespective of their caste and creed.

In the peculiar situation of India, secularism as an instrument of social change and political transformation has at least three operational (as between religion-based segments such as Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, etc.); (ii) as a process of inter-community social integration (as between the *varna*-cum-*jati* segments of the Hindus and the social strata among the Muslims, Christians, etc.); and (iii) as the dominant political idiom, method and objective of general socio-political change in order to transform a religion-dominated ethos into an ethos of enlightened humanism.

Secularism in India, therefore, appears both as an ideal and as a reality. It is evident that in many ways we are far from the realisation of the ideal. But it is equally apparent that there is a national consensus for the steady realisation of secularism as an operative principle of national politics. Secularism in India is an evolving reality through an agonising process, but then that is probably also true of the other major ideals before the country.

Secularism in the imagination of religiously devout politicians and many other well-meaning nationalists meant no more than political reconciliation of religious communities and harmonisation of communalism. The argument was that individual communalism was bad but multiple communalism held in balance by state would lead to compulsory toleration and unavoidable appreciation of each other, by mutual acceptance of each other's separate identity. This is the implication of the much publicised Vedantic ideal of "equal respect to all faiths" (*sarva dharma samabhava*), which is proclaimed as the genuine Indian interpretation of secularism. As an extension of this assumption it follows, for example, that to chant the Vedas alone or to recite only the Quran at a state or national function might be communal and non-secular. But to simultaneously chant the Vedas, recite the Quran, sing the Psalms of David, read passages from the Dhammapada, and listen to the devotional songs from the Granth Sahib and to the verses of a Zindavasta would be the pure assertion of secularism and indeed an affirmation of national integration. Secularism meant, so to say, compound communalism, resulting in the cheerful fusion of religious symbols, idioms and social rituals through the theosophical Ram-Rahim approach to politics.

In the name of defining the Indian form of secularism, we overlooked its basic universal ingredients of adherence to rationalism and scientific temper and, on the contrary, we almost always defined secularism in India to mean some sort of multi-communalism. In the name of toleration of all communities, and their eventual harmonisation, what we finally achieved is reconciliation of multiple communalism, promotion of multiple obscurantism, universal superstition and mixing of all mythologies. Only uni-communalism is assumed to be against secularism, and that too, not always; while multi-communalism is facilely recognised as the very hall-mark of authentic Indian nationalism and an affirmation of our patriotism. If at a state function all the scriptures are recited, simultaneously or one after another, it is recognised as the very ethos of Indian identity—a celebration of genuine Indian fraternity. There can be no more spurious interpretation of secularism than this. Because of our peculiar facility in living a life of hypocrisy, we declare that we are secular, while we indulge in practices and rituals, openly and formally, with pomp and fanfare, which are the very negation of a secular culture, secular values and secular orientation.

But even this pretence today is being by and large avoided by more powerful communal lobbies. so far we have heard *ad-nauseum* that the religious minorities and their culture and so-called identities are in 'danger'. For generations Islam in India, in the imagination of certain votaries, has somehow always been in 'danger'. One thought this to be a peculiar form of 'Muslim melancholy', and learned to live with it, sometime in bewilderment, sometime in anger, sometime in despair, and all the time in disbelief. Now since 1980, or near about, we are told that Sikhism (which was once even claimed to be the shield of Hinduism) is also in abject and mortal 'danger' and that too only and exclusively due to the Hindus! Small mercy that the Buddhists and the Jains have so far not expressed themselves in this dismal idiom; on the contrary, some of the leading Jain intellectuals and journalists have become crusading defenders of *Hindutva*. But the most bizarre development on the communal horizon today is that we hear, with recurrent emphasis and woe, and in strident tones, that Hinduism and the mighty Hindu community, comprising a little more than 80 per cent of our people, are in 'danger' and that its traditions, religious practices, values, culture and identity are threatened as never before, by the minorities in India, with the conivance of the powers-that-be!

It is maintained by otherwise well-meaning persons with scholarly predilection that secularism is a slogan and an orientation that is essentially meant to weaken the so-called 'Hindu solidarity'. Some even hold that secularism has only a relevance in politics dominated by an organised Church—like the Catholics, the Protestants, the Church of England, the Muslims, the Mahayana Buddhists, etc.—and not in India, where the majority Hindu community is not only without an organised Church but is also an amorphous, heterogeneous religious community, attuned by its very teachings to all religions. Few others assert that since Hinduism is pluralistic, therefore it has a primordial secular approach itself. They say: What is then the need to go on speaking about secularism in a predominantly Hindu polity? Because to be Hindu is to be secular.

It is in this situation, confused by the pseudo-theorists of Hindu religious revivalism, that it is necessary to remember that while all communalism is bad, the majority communalism is worst. The majority community ordinarily determines the basic social ethos of a country. Communalism of the minority exhibits itself in forms like 'separatism', 'exclusivism', 'withdrawal', 'anarchism' and it focuses itself on limited symbols, specific and divisive traditions, and on a wide range of differences and dichotomies away from the mainstream commonalities. On the other hand, communalism of the majority can pass-off as nationalism itself, because it is pervasive, dominant and with deeper historical roots and a greater range of commonalities. It is capable of focusing on the many symbols of the past and of drawing sustenance from the basic structure of traditions, customs, conventions, festivities, etc. of the nation. But what is more frightening is that if the majority community exhibits the besieged psychology of the minorities and feel threatened, either in fact or in imagination, then it also exhibits minority traits of 'separatism', 'exclusivism', 'withdrawal' and 'anarchism' and thereby in its approach and transactions, transforms itself into the mould of the gigantic minority, arrayed in combat formation and in belligerent equation with other minorities. It seems in India we are passing through this alarming and dismal phase in our national life.

Thanks to the enlightened and democratic heritage of composite federal-nationalism, India did not become formally a Hindu State. But neither did it become an authentic Secular State. Due to the pulls and pressures of communal politics, and confusion in the ranks of the secularists, the shape that the Indian State has acquired is a Hindu version of pseudo-secular state.

It is this crises that has to be overcome by the concerted efforts of the democratic and secular forces in India today in order to restore to the Indian State the authentic secular image, and help it play the catalytic role as an instrument of socio-economic transformation, in order to change a classic traditional society into a vibrant modern polity. ■

(Concluded)

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SUMIT : Russian Referendum

(Continued from page 6)

Court, voting would be valid if the polling was more than 50 per cent of the electorate) and no polling took place in Checheniya whose government seeking independence from Russia did not want to hold the referendum of a foreign state on its soil.

Yeltsin's opponents have not levelled charges of rigging (which, according to observers sympathetic to the anti-Yeltsin camp, would not exceed two per cent). But there have been widespread charges of misuse of authority and power. First, considerable economic concessions were doled out on the eve of the referendum to influence the vulnerable sections of the populace. (These, experts feel, would help to further fuel inflation in the days ahead.) Secondly, the official media, the TV in particular, was used only for Yeltsin's publicity, his opponents being denied access to it. (The classic case was the refusal to grant access to Rutskoi's People's Party of Free Russia in the normal channels of Moscow TV and instead allowing it to use the commercial channel which facility too was not given once it became known that Rutskoi himself would appeal to the electorate on that channel.) It is to be noted that Rutskoi, and not Khasbulatov, is emerging as the real rival of Yeltsin—a recent opinion poll showed 20 per cent of those surveyed expressing their support for him.

Yeltsin and his associates are interpreting the results as a moral victory for the President and his "shock therapy". Hence they are keen to go ahead bypassing and ignoring the Parliament. (Yeltsin was asked by Yelena Bonner, Andrei Sakharov's widow, at a Red Square rally in March whether he could take the solemn oath never to "compromise with those devils" in Parliament—and he pledged never to take such a step. Hence his uncompromising stand after the referendum. In fact Yeltsin's actions are geared to the Russians' admiration for a "strong leader", something they could not find in Gorbachev—one reason for the latter's lack of popularity today. As Jonathan Steele perceptively wrote in the *Gurdian Weekly* of March 28, 1993: "The hankering for a 'strong hand' is deeply engrained in Russia. Mr Yeltsin is seeking to exploit that to his advantage. An old Russian tragedy is being replayed.") However, anyone dissecting the outcome of the referendum would clearly perceive the message of the Russian people who, even without any tradition of democratic functioning, voted with considerable maturity: the President and Parliament should work together through compromise. Interestingly, that is the line of Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin who is opting for the consensual Gorbachevian course that both sides—blinded by short-term considerations based on subjectivism—reject with contempt.

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HOWEVER, if the ugly events of May1—when the May Day processionists clashed with the security forces (deliberately or otherwise) in Moscow's Gagarin Square—are any indicator, failure to adopt the path of compromise would be quite costly in the long run. Even if Russia does not face the prospects of an immediate outbreak of civil war with the military still adopting a neutral stand, it is of no mean significance that one of Yeltsin's closest aides, Gennady Burbulis, the former Russian Secretary of State, who was in India to participate in a two-day international meet organised by the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, told an Indian political leader that the Presidential team's first priority task was to "preserve civic peace" the threat to which—from the side of the minority Opposition, in Burbilis' view—was quite real. Obviously that task presupposes adoption of steps that help to defuse tensions and reduce the possibilities of confrontation. This is where the word 'compromise' assumes increasing legitimacy. (Even on March 28, Jonathan Steele had writted in the *Guardian Weekly:* "He (Yeltsin) should have tried to compromise on the economy with the two-thirds of Deputies who favour some market reform. He should have accepted a balance of power rather than going for one-man rule.")

Despite the fact that the referendum has only sharpened the power struggle and widened the divide in Russian society, there is still enough wisdom among the Russian people and their leaders to avert a bloody confrontation and choose the path of honourable compromise. This is where the Centrist forces like the Civic Union headed by Rutskoi have a pivotal role to play (for it is they and not the thoroughly discredited nationalist-communist combine steeped in old values who have the potentiality to mount the real opposition to the Presidency). However, the Yeltsin camp's current stand of carrying out measures without parliamentary sanction—like the possible adoption of the new Constitution by the Federation Council of representatives of republics and regions prior to the setting up of a new Constituent Assembly or the holding of a fresh referendum on the Constitution—might torpedo any compromise in the near future. That would doubtless trample underfeet the basic message of the referendum which extremists on both sides are trying their utmost to conceal.

In the light of these developments there is no gainsaying that as of now the situation in Russia has turned more complex and tense than what it was before the April 25 referendum. ■

A Purposeful Exercise

S.C.

A two-day International Conference organised by the Rajiv Gandhi Foundtion in New Delhi on May 1 and 2 saw the formal launching of the Rajiv Gandhi Memorial Initiative for the Advancement of Human Civilisation at the core of which lies a number of measures updating the Action Plan for a Nuclear-Weapons-Free and Non-Violent World Order submitted by the late Rajiv Gandhi as the Prime Minister of India to the UN Third Special Session on Diasrmament on June 9, 1988.

These steps on the basis of which negotiations on universal treaties and conventions could immediately commence are:

a total ban on all nuclear tests;

banning the threat or use of nuclear weapons, with corresponding confidence-building measures, including the deactivation of all missiles capable of carrying nuclear wrheads, and a complete inventory and control of nuclear-weapon-grade materials, nuclear warheads and bombs, and their delivery vehicles;

the cessation of any further production of nuclear weapons and weapon-grade fissionable materials, including the closure or conversion of nuclear weapon prodution facilities and test sites;

the cessation of the transfer to other states of nuclear weapons, delivery systems, and weapon-grade fissionable materials;

placing under the control of an international authority all existing stocks of weapons-usable nuclear material;

a moratorium on the testing and deployment of all space weapon systems, leading to an international agreement to ban the testing, development, deployment and storage of all space weapons;

restriction of the development of ballistic missiles and re-entry vehicles to those intended for peaceful purposes;

control and management of new military technologies by bringing all new technology projects and technology missions with military potential under the purview of the United Nations system, leading to an agreement to ban technological missions aimed at the development of new weapon systems;

establishment of an integrated multilateral verificationn system, with effective sanctions, for monitoring the implementation of conventions and treaties under the aegis of the United Nations;

an immediate declaraton reaffirming the illegitimacy of any threat or use of nuclear weapons;

the immediate commencement of a negotiating process aimed at the elimination of all nuclear weapons by international treaty as early as possible and, in any case, not later than the year 2010, based on a comprehensive verification system that precludes the production of any nuclear weapons;

in exchange, undertaking by non-nuclear weapon powers to not acquire or take steps towards acquiring nuclear weapons;

reduction of all conventional forces to minimum defensive levels as early as possible and, in any case, not later than the year 2010;

establishment of a comprehensive global security system, backed by a permanent military force under strict UN control, to sustain a world without nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

The Conference was attended by leading public figures, former Presidents, Prime Ministers and Ministers as well as noted intellectuals from different parts of world like the erstwhile Mexican President, Miguel de La Madrid Hurtado, the former New Zealand Prime Minister, David Lange, the former Nigerian President, General Olusegun Obasanjo, the former Indian President, R. Venkataraman, the former Nepalese Prime Minister, K.P. Bhattarai, the former Vietnamese Foreign Minister, Nguyen Co-Thach, the former Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr Kamal Hossain, the former Russian Secretary of State, Dr Gennadi Burbulis, Senator Alan Cranston of the US, American Professor Richard Falk from the Princeton University, the former Chinese Ambassador, Tu Guowei, the Nobel Laureate in Chemistry, John Polanyi.

The Declaration at the end of the meet greeted the US-Russian Agreement at the Vancouver Summit and underlined:

> Nuclear weapons development must be terminated completely forever. Bearing in mind the forthcoming review of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), we state emphatically that any prohibition on testing must be a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban (CNBT) as this is essential for the non-proliferation and elimination of nuclear weapons. A comprehensive test ban would reduce the discriminatory nature of the NPT and such discrimination will only be fully overcome when the existing nuclear weapon states renounce reliance on nuclear weaponry and move expeditiously to accomplish its elimination.

The Declaration highlighted the need to intensify efforts to fight the scourge of dehumanising poverty in large parts of the world.

> A substantive attack on poverty and creating conditions for reducing growing global disparties should be urgently undertaken and implemented. Absolute poverty should be eliminated by 2000. A new era of international economic cooperation should be promoted having regard to the growing globalisation of the world economy and its impact in the fields of trade, finance and technology, and the need for increased flows of financial resources, so as to effectively support sustainable development as envisaged by the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. We are particularly concerned that efforts be made to protect the weakest and most vulnerable States from the impact of global market forces, especially in relation to such matters as external debt, restraints on trade, and the accountability of transnational corporations and banks.

The task of safeguarding the Earth's integrated environment was once again brought into focus in th Declaration and the national governments were urged to lend support to Rajiv Gandhi's purposal for a Planet Protection Fund—to be used for the transfer, free of charge, of conservation compatible technologies, to all Fund members—made at the 1989 NAM Summit at Belgrade.

The Declaration further highlighted the need to promote humanitarian values and democratic practices the world over, adding:

> We strongly condemn ethnic cleansing, systematic rape, and other genocidal acts, as well as racially and religion-inspired oppression of minorities, and all other forms of collective punishment as incompatible with the non-violent world order we aspire to establish.

It then proclaimed:

> For the rule of law, justice and the spirit of friendship to prevail in international relations, the democratisation of the international system, based on due respect for the sovereignty of States, is necessary. As a first step in this direction, we urge a substantial enlargement of the Security Council to reflect the fundamental changes that have taken place since the Organisation's inception. A suitably enlarged Security Council should play its proper role in hastening the elimination of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and in monitoring progress of the process.
>
> There is also clear need for an enlargement of the UN General Assembly's role in global security matters—especially in conflict—prevention and conflict-resolution, including the socio-economic causes of conflicts within nations. A strengthened collective security system requires major advances in international law, including acceptance by all states of the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice, and the establishment of a permanent international criminal court.

Inaugurating the Conference the President, Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma, emphasised the necessity to eliminate the divisive forces "which malevolently keep humankind apart" as a basic precondition for the advancement of human civilisation.

> Objective factors which impede the march of civilisation and stand in the way of the unity of mankind are injustice and exploitation in all their morbid manifestations, and are all too well known to an impatient world. Fear, prejudice and intolerance are no less potent dangers to the future of our planet. These blight the flowering of man's legitimate endeavours and aspirations.

Noting that in the recent past "humankind has taken one step back from self-annihilation", he called for many more similar steps to protect humanity from destruction and give strength to the motor forces of civilisation.

> In a world compressed by knowledge, we need to add the leaven of understanding. The words of the poet—"ask not for whom the bell tolls, for it tolls for thee"—acquire fresh meaning and significance. We cannot, even if we so willed, remain indifferent to peoples around us nor shrink from the task of advancing human civilisation as a whole to greater unity, greater heights of achievement.

In his speech, quite unconventional in content, Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao made a significant observation:

> Everyone seems to connive in preserving the system, even if it is rotten. The reluctance to risk the end of the present decadent but familiar system, for a new, desirable but unfamiliar one is at the root of many of our evils. There is a pall of hypocrisy which everyone detests and everyone shares. This is eating into the vitals of our civilisation, sapping its resilience and audacity. The Indian civilisation has never succumbed in the past, to excessively the long spells of hypocrisy. Some Buddha, some Charvaka, some Shankaracharya, some Amir Khusro, some Malik Mohammad Jaisi, some Kabir, some Tukaram, some Vemana, some Ranade, some Dayanand, some Rammohun Roy, some Veerasalingam, some Gandhi, some Jawaharlal, some Ambedkar, some Tagore—someone always appeared on the scene, to salvage its vitality before it was too late. The process was disrupted before reaching the take off when Rajiv Gandhi could have brought up the trail effectively. The scenario today is rather bewildering. Realising this, I had made a fervent appeal for a massive movement of social reform a year back. I still think that the country is waiting for the social revolution which the dominant politicaal process has overshadowed for too long.

The valdedictory address was delivered by the Vice-President, K.R. Narayanan, who noted:

> With the current lifting of the nuclear spectre from the minds of people as a result of the end of the Cold War and the collapse of Soviet power we tend to ignore the long-term danger. It is not only the danger of total annihilation that faces mankind. This possibility of total annihilation had set in motion profound cultural and psychological consequences affecting the individual human being as well as world society as a whole...Mankind has to be liberated from this ultimate fear of extinction for the advancement of civilisation on earth.

The discussions offered an opportunity for fruitful interaction among the participants that revealed a wide range of agreement on the issues under scrutiny. On the whole it was a purposeful exercise whose success in the long-term is bound to have a durable impact on the global environment. A follow-up of the Conference is likely to take place in Moscow in the near future since Burbulis has made the suggestion to the organisers. However, all those who could not arrive for the Conference—and they include Mikhail Gorbachev (Russia), Benazir Bhutto (Pakistan) and Daniel Ortega (Nicaragua)—have conveyed their readiness to fully cooperate with the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation in furthering the noble objective of the meet. They too would be associated with the follow-up endeavours in the days ahead. ■

TAMIL NADU

Strategy to Eliminate Child Labour

VINOO HORA

April 30 is observed as the Child Workers' Day the world over. Addressing a gathering of newspersons in New Delhi on the eve of the Child Workers' Day, Dr Eimi Watanabe, head of the UNICEF's India Country Office, quoted the horrendous figure of 100 million child workers in the world. A 100 million innocent lives sacrificed at the altar of livelihood.

India, one has to shamefacedly admit, is the biggest culprit as far as exploitation of child is concerned—be it at home, in industries or employed as domestic help. We are also guilty of being the biggest exporters of unskilled labour.

The last forty-odd years have witnessed many welfare schemes for child labourers; for instance, proper working hours, evening schools, etc. But in retrospect we find that these in a way condoned the practice of child labour.

Therefore, when Tamil Nadu decided to formulate a new strategy aimed at eradicating the social malaise that is child labour, it was decided first to carry out an indepth survey and then draft a framework with the help of representatives of the Department of Labour and Employment, Social Welfare and Education, in collaboration with the UNICEF.

Economic cause having been pinpointed as the main reason for child labour, it has been decided to offer an alternative means of livelihood to parents who have to withdraw their children from school to lend a hand in the fields, to look after the younger brothers and sisters while the mothers are away to work or perhaps work in hazardous circumstances in factories. It was found that the match industry in Kamarajar district employed child labour of which 80 per cent were girls working full time. Thus, the problem of child labour is also a manifestation of the problem of the girl child.

In order to discourage parents from sending their children off to earn wages and to encourage them to send them instead to school (which is a fundamental right of every child) it is imperative that the parents be offered higher wages and a fine imposed on them if they withdrew the child and forced him into child labour. It is equally important that the status of primary education at village level be raised. At the moment, the conditions in village primary schools is pathetic—there are no blackboards, no furniture, the teachers draw salaries but abstain from teaching; generally, the parents feel that attending school is a waste of time and the children could be more fruitfully employed in factories instead. Raising the standard of education at primary level thus must be done to inculcate interest in parents and children in studies and gradually with the passage of time it would become a norm to send children to school. This would also check the high rate of school drop-outs in the age group of 12 to 14.

Once this is done, the goal of universalising primary education will be within reach. The Tamil Nadu Government is confident that their aim—for "compulsory enrolment and retention of children in primary schools...." and "to make it obligatory for every parent to send the child to school" and thus the eventual elimination of child labour—will be realised within a period of five years.

The broad action plan of the Jayalalitha Government has commenced on May 1, 1993 and will see fruition by March 31, 1998. The programme consists of four key elements:

* Following the enactment of a new law on compulsory education, it will be made legally binding for every parent to send the child to school rather than to work.
* All hand-made match units enjoy sales tax exemption. We shall consider continuing this exemption only if they progressively reduce child labour in a specified time-frame.
* A special programme of social mobilisation, communication and community awareness will be facilitated so that there is growing social consciousness against this practice.
* A new programme will be launched in this area for the economic betterment of women.

Dr Watanabe commended the pioneering efforts of the Tamil Nadu Government for elimination of child labour. Not without reason, most media persons were dubious about the realisation of the State Chief Minister, Jayalalitha's vision: wherefrom the funds to invest in this scheme; would it be possible at all to bring about such a socio-economic revolution; what if the government changed hands (queried some pessimists); who was to ensure the implementation of such a plan; what if it was only a political gimmick? In fact, the UNICEF itself came under flak for being too soft on the Government of India.

Yes, agreed both Dr Watanabe and Razia Ismail (UNICEF's Chief of Information, Communication and External Relations) but that was in the past. Last November the Government of India ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and that has strengthened the hands of the UNICEF and made them more vocal.

Dr Watanabe appealed to the media to endeavour to make the State Governments sit up and do some introspection of their policies, particularly where the safeguarding of the fundamental rights of the child are concerned. This can be done, says Razia Ismail, only if the issue is tackled as an economic problem. A shift is required, she said.

Will the UNICEF be monitoring the progress in Tamil Nadu? "Certainly not," Razia Ismail replied instantly, "You do it, that is for the media to do." ■

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Mainstream

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EDITORIAL

Disgraceful !

It is indeed a disgraceful spectacle. The directive issued by the ruling Congress party to its MPs in the Lok Sabha to abstain from voting on the motion of impeachment of Justice V. Ramaswami, the controversial Supreme Court judge, has prevented indictment of a personality whose misconduct was nailed down by several constitutional authorities. The report of the Attorney-General, the statement of the Chief Justice of India in full court and the report of the three-member Judges Inquiry Committee appointed by the Chief Justice—all had upheld the charge of Justice Ramaswami's misbehaviour. And yet the Congress MPs shied away from the responsibility of taking a position on the issue and judging his conduct!

The report of the Judges Inquiry Committee had concluded with the following observations:

> Justice Ramaswami's conduct, that is, his several acts of omission and commission, reflected in our findings on charges....., discloses wilful and gross misuse of office, purposeful and persistent negligence in the discharge of duties, intentional and habitual extravagance at the cost of the public exchequer, moral turpitude by using public funds for private purposes in diverse ways and reckless disregard of statutory rules and brings disrepute to the high judicial office and dishonour to the institution of judiciary and undermines the faith and confidence which the public reposes in the administration of justice. The acts are of such a nature that his continuance in office will be prejudicial to the administration of justice and to the public interest. The acts, therefore, constitute 'misbehaviour' within the meaning of Article 124(4) of the Constitution of India.

What are the natural inferences to be drawn by the public from the Congress MPs' action in the Lok Sabha on May 11? They are as follows:

a) the Congress is shielding a guilty judge, even after he stands condemned by his peers;
b) the Congress has proved that it remains indifferent to the vital question of fighting corruption in public life.

As for (a), the defeat of the impeachment motion will vitiate the sanctity of the judiciary itself as it is bound to encourage the black sheep among those in the judicial profession. As regards (b), the Union Law Minister, H.R. Bharadwaj, was most eloquent in his defence of Justice Ramaswami by claiming that misuse of official facilities was a "trivial" matter and asserting that it was indulged in by everybody including Ministers. His simple query—"who does not do it?"—carried a profound meaning the implications of which were not lost even when Bharadwaj hastily added that he himself was an exception to the rule.

It is in this context that one needs to project the contrast between the manner in which the leaders acted in similar situations in the by-gone days and the way our present-day leaders function. As George

Fernandes, the eminent Opposition parliamentarian, pointed out during his brilliant speech on the motion, Jawaharlal Nehru had (while alluding to the charges against Mulchand D. Mudgal, an MP who was removed from the House as per an unanimous resolution moved by Nehru himself), highlighted both the "dignity of the House and proper behaviour of a member". Those words hold little significance for the large band of Congress parliamentarians who remain unmoved by glaring instances of corruption in the high echelons of power. Their stand on this score has been reinforced by the behaviour of the party leadership including the Congress President.

Several Congress MPs, particularly those from Tamil Nadu, were worried that the impeachment of Justice Ramaswami would be received adversely by the people of that State to which the Supreme Court judge belongs. What does this reveal? With all its claims to a national party standing for national integration it has no compunction in surrendering to regional and parochial sentiments. Hence when the Congress is the arbiter the guilty can easily get away scot free by rousing base passions of communal, caste and regional loyalties. Is this not a matter of shame for the nation as a whole?

It was necessary for those Congress MPs who wanted to support the motion of impeachment to revolt against the directive to abstain and exercise their conscience vote. Their inability to do so has once again laid bare the bankruptcy of the organisation. As a result of this step aimed at shielding Justice Ramaswami the Congress prestige and stature have suffered massive erosion in the public eye. Unless the honest and upright Congressmen still in the party intervene immediately and oppose the rank opportunism of the party leaders determined to compromise with the forces of moral turpitude, it will be an uphill task for the Congress to repair the damage and recover from this grievous blow.

May 12 *S.C.*

Bankruptcy at Policy Level

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

With all the excitement generated over the Ramaswami impeachement, the Narasimha Rao Government has good reason to thank the Opposition for letting the Budget pass with only a token show of dissent.

This marks a major headway for the government which had to pass quite a few anxious moments when it was reported that the BJP would not hesitate to support the cut motions due to be moved by the National Front-Left combine. The fact of having escaped defeat in the Lok Sabha voting on the Budget has no doubt brought a sense of relief for the Narasimha Rao Government which has been carrying on without commanding majority support in Parliament.

But to win battles is not the same thing as winning the war. The battle is thus won by Narasimha Rao in the parliamentary confrontation with the Opposition, but there is as yet no sign of the government's capacity to win the war, to ward off or overpower the challenges that face it on the national plane. It is precisely in this area that the weakness of the present government is palpable.

We seem to have reached a blind alley in Kashmir. The Minister for Internal Security, Rajesh Pilot, may be spending a lot of physical energy rushing about the place, holding earnest consultations with officials, both civil and military, high and low. But in terms of a policy perspective, all this is as bleak as an arid desert in dealing with the turbulence in the Valley. The new Governor is, after all, not so new as he has had extensive experience of dealing with Kashmir, both on the defence and political sides. But the Governor on his own initiative can only help marginally. What is needed is a clear policy approach on the part of the Centre. To talk about restoring normalcy before elections can take place—as has been done by the Union Home Minister—is really begging the question. For everybody knows from the Hizbul militant in the Valley to the Pandit refugee in Jammu that there could be no election anywhere until normalcy is restored.

The point to raise here is what the plans of the Centre are to bring back normalcy. It is admitted in responsible circles within the government—and

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For a Rational Relationship

MAZHAR ALI KHAN

This is the last article of Mazhar Ali Khan, the outstanding journalist of Pakistan (who edited the progressive journal Viewpoint*), to have reached* The Statesman *recently. Mazhar Ali Khan passed away in Pakistan last January. The article appeared in* The Statesman *on May 5, 1992. It is being reproduced from there with due acknowledgement.* —Editor

History offers ample testimony to prove that an amalgam of religious sectarianism and partisan politics makes an explosive mix. Particularly so, when blind prejudice and rabid zealotry combine to breed intolerance, the inevitable result is the indiscriminate use of force. Recent happenings in India, and their echoes in Pakistan and Bangladesh, have confirmed this ugly reality.

Repeated killing, arson and loot in communal riots demand that all people recall the stand taken in similar circumstances by the men who led the subcontinent to freedom. The events leading to Mahatma Gandhi's martyrdom at the hands of the RSS activists reveal his readiness to stake his life for communal peace and Indo-Pakistan friendship. In a different way, the same aim was outlined with eloquent earnestness by Mohammed Ali Jinnah in his historic address to Pakistan's Constituent Assembly. Without any ambivalence, he stressed that the country he had helped to establish was to be a secular state; and that, after a settlement of basic issues by common consent, the people must bury the hatchet so that they could live in peace and harmony, as citizens of a free state, enjoying equal rights irrespective of caste or creed.

The ideals advocated by their founding fathers have not been realised, neither in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan nor in the secular state of India even after 45 years of trouble and turmoil. The chain of events that started on December 6, 1992, indicates that the lust for blood and the mad desire for destruction have not been satiated. Even weeks after the Ayodhya tragedy, rioting did not subside in some parts of India. The situation leaves no doubt that the upsurge of regressive Hindu fundamentalism, carefully planned by the *Sangh Parivar*, threatens to disrupt the whole country and wipe out all that has been accomplished in a near half-century under the guidance of the Nehruvian philosophy.

Apparently, a large majority of Indians feel that the developments following the Ayodhya episode can destroy all the civilised values that India seeks to promote. This threat has snowballed during the last decade or more because secular forces have been weakened and some of Jawaharlal Nehru's political heirs have proved unworthy of carrying his mantle. It is also realised widely that the only way to combat the reactionary force of *Hindutva* is for all democratic, secular parties to work together, so that the strange trend of the RSS and its adjuncts making steady gains in India, particularly in the northern belt, can be reversed.

The diagnosis of the malady, that can prove to be lethal, is unquestionably correct, and today's para-politicians have been unable to find and apply the appropriate remedies. Many leaders have spoken of the need for a broad united front. So far, all that has emerged is an alliance of 13 parties already forming a loose coalition, comprising the Left Front and the National Front including the Janata Dal. This is not enough, for the plain reason that it leaves out the ruling Congress party.

The Janata Dal leaders argue that the Congress cannot be associated with this movement because it has pandered to the BJP and is guilty of inaction that allowed demolition of the Babari mosque. The Left Front has voiced an additional objection against collaboration with the Congress, by pointing out that its economic policies are dictated by the IMF and World Bank and cannot be tolerated because they harm working class interests. At the same time, a few Congress leaders are trying to push Narasimha Rao out of his two important offices.

◆

ALL leaders loyal to secular principles seem to believe that India will somehow muddle through, and that even if they continue to fight among themselves the electorate will show greater maturity and act to help overcome the RSS threat. No honest obsever can share this

(Continued on page 35)

TRIBUTE

S.M.

Mainstream *joins the entire community of media practitioners in paying homage to the memory of Shrikrishna Mulgaokar who passed away on May 9, 1992 at the age of 80. In a career spread over nearly six decades, Mulgaokar served in various capacities starting as a sports reporter to a sub-editor to a brilliant foreign correspondent and then serving as an outstanding Editor of two of the leading dailies of the country, namely,* The Hindustan Times *and* Indian Express. *He was a great Editor, widely known for his rapier-like pen which powerfully intervened in many a political battle in the country. As the leader of the team, he was always loved and respected by his colleagues whom he had trained up as journalists. He was an unflinching champion of the freedom of the press and was the founder of the Editors' Guild of India. His passing away marks the disappearance of a landmark in the eventful annals of the Indian press.* Mainstream *publishes below an intimate tribute from a distinguished journalist who had worked under Mulgaokar.* —Editor

Go in Peace, Shiri

HARISH CHANDOLA

Though he remained a very private person throughout his life, not to be seen in public and scrupulously avoiding publicity, Shrikrishna Shantaram Mulgaokar, whom his friends bade the final goodbye at Delhi's electric crematorium on May 9, became the best-known Editor in our country.

He was one of whom myths are made and told, in his own lifetime.

The day he died, new myths were made, and gained currency in papers the following day. But no paper could find a decent photograph of him including the one of which he was the longest-serving Editor. That was how private he was.

In the middle of the forties he came to *The Hindustan Times*, to become one of the two chief sub-editors of it. Its Managing Editor then was Devdas Gandhi, who possessed. and used, his arbitrary power to hire and fire, because then there were no laws to protect journalists. We used to be in awe of him.

Believing that he had mastered other aspects of managing a paper, Devdas one day decided to learn sub-editing, at night, when the main morning edition is made. Shiri used to do night shifts because during the day he had other interests to pursue, like studying horses and jockeys and going to the races, where he inevitably made money. Or, having a daylong session of bridge, in which also he won.

So, in the large gloomy hall called newsroom, we would have Shiri at the head of the long sub-editors' desk, and Devdas at its other end, with sub-editors wedged in between. I was the juniormost, brought there after failing as a teleprinter operator.

By 11, Devdas would begin asking: Mulgaokar, have you decided on the lead?

Mulgaokar would not answer.

Half an hour later, the question would be repeated, but again there would be no reply.

God! We would hold our breath, and wonder if Shiri was going to get fired on the spot.

On the third call, Mulgaokar, still not replying, would ask Bhagwati, a peon, to place a chair near Devdas, and then go over with a couple of copy.

But he would not sit, but stand and put his right foot on the chair placed for him, his knee not far from the face of Devdas, and begin telling him, in the most casual manner: Yes, I have these two-three stories, and I think I am going to lead with this one.

Devdas was god in *The Hindustan Times* and nobody dared take liberties with him.

Except Mulgaokar.

The only other thing we would hear from him during the night would be to tell Bhagwati to bring tea. And tea would be brought, at Mulgaokar's expense, for the entire shift, including Devdas, who never ordered it himself.

This was a daily routine in his shift.

He never shouted at any of us for giving a headline that would not fit, was wrong or poorly phrased. If he did not like it, he would take off the pin that held it to the copy, send the copy for composing and place the headline in the waste-paper basket.

Used to choicest abuses from the other chief sub, all of us looked forward to be in Mulgaokar's shift.

Just past midnight, he would go down to the composing room, a floor below, to start the make-up of pages. And there, on the stone, he would give headlines to stories we had subbed. Which meant standing in that lead-fume-filled hall, where 18 Linotype machines melted metal and cast new slabs, for hours.

That, I believe, poisoned his lungs, and gave him emphysema, of which he finally died, after suffering for almost two decades.

◆

THEN *The Times of India*, which he joined in 1951 to become its roving foreign correspondent, sent him to Calcutta, as the Resident-Editor of its ill-fated edition there, in 1953.

He had not forgotten us, left on *The Hindustan Times* desk, and called over several to join him on better salaries.

When he came back to *The Hindustan Times* in 1958, Durga Das, who had succeeded Devdas, upon his death, having failed to convince the owner, G.D. Birla, to let him continue as the Editor, went to the Home Minister, G.B. Pant, to seek his help in retaining his position. But Mulgaokar, who had been brought from Washington where he was *The Times of India* correspondent, insisted and fought to see to it that the arrangement made with him was honoured, and succeeded in becoming the paper's Editor, displacing Durga Das.

He was the only Editor of a national daily to call the silence of the Indian Government over the suppression of the Hungarian and Czechoslovak uprisings by Soviet troops and tanks, a crime. Yet, he was the only Editor whom Nehru invited to breakfast regularly to discuss a wide range of subjects, in spite of their differences over the ability and role of Krishna Menon and India's blind support for Moscow.

He was also the only Editor to whom proprietors paid court. Years ago, one early morning, I saw R.N. Goenka arriving at Shiri's residence. Shiri was in the toilet. Goenka came with a big, fresh, vermilion mark on his forehead.

"Where are you coming from?" I asked. "From the house of one god, to that of another," he said. It was a Tuesday and he was coming from a Hanuman temple. He was the proprietor of the *Indian Express*, and Mulgaokar its Editor.

And then on night train, Goenka, Mulgaokar and Nanaji going to Gonda, the first two playing cards for stakes, and Goenka losing all the time and finally throwing up his hands in despair and accusing Mulgaokar of cheating!

Never would have one seen Mulgaokar behaving as an employee. He was an equal among men, and always bigger than the job he held.

During the Emergency, he was made to leave the editorship of the *Indian Express*. Before that, someone had fixed an appointment for him with Sanjay Gandhi, to help him open a chapter of good relations with that powerful son of Mrs Gandhi, and thus keep his job secure.

The interview was a disaster, with Sanjay telling him that newspapers must act with responsibility, Mulgaokar questioning him on his definition of responsibility, Sanjay not being able to do so beyond giving the example of *The Hindu* as a responsible paper, and Mulgaokar getting up to go and thus terminating the conversation, after coming to the conclusion that most of what was being said to him was rubbish.

And losing his job.

After that, he prepared himself to go to Manipal in Karnataka, to live there, because he could not afford the rents in Delhi. He paid six months' rent in advance to some relation of T.A. Pai, who rented him his Manipal house. The one the *Indian Express* had given him as the Editor, 25 Jorbagh, had been taken away from him.

But his wife did not want to leave Delhi and live in Manipal. So they had to go and live in the house of her sister's husband in Delhi.

A prominent fortnightly magazine offered him to write two pieces a month for it, for Rs 750 each, and Mulgaokar was happy that he would at least have an income of Rs 1500 a month. The fortnightly, perhaps frightened of government wrath at its allowing Mulgaokar to write, reneged on that offer, and he had to spend two years in someone else's home. Without any income, in those dark days.

◆

HE had played truant at school, skipping classes and examinations. He came to journalism from the Bombay Stock Exchange, where he had traded in shares. He had to go there to work and earn a living, at a very young age, because he had upset his parents by spending time on cricket and hockey fields instead of studying.

In the beginning he made money, but when the share-prices collapsed in the thirties, he was declared bankrupt. It was then that he thought of making a living from his love and knowledge of sports, and went over to the *Bombay Chronicle* to offer to cover hockey, football and cricket matches, for a very irregular payment of something like Rs 10 a column-inch for his printed stuff.

He wrote so well that in no time he was appointed a sub-editor.

From there, he went to *The Pioneer* in Lucknow as a sub-editor in 1940, from where the English Editor, P. Keatly, brought him to *The Hindustan Times* in 1945, when he himself made that transition.

It will be difficult to talk of all the things Shiri was interested in. But for him perhaps I would never have seen the Chelsea Flower Show, the eunuch market in Singapore's Bugis Street, taken my children to eat fresh king prawns and crabs at wayside restaurants along Malaysia's Malacca coast, or heard the best *kawaals* of our subcontinent.

He was an excellent cook, a connoisseur of wine and drink (once a little too fond of it), a great bridge player, a music-lover, an expert in cars, a sports fan, a satirist, a writer of sparkling language, a sartorial purist (I do not remember how many times he had argued with tailors in foreign lands over the cut of his jacket collar), and a superb host.

Of these, people know mostly his writings. He wrote with great ease, in long hand, and never revised his copy.

In his dying days, as his cough-racked emaciated body lay slumped on an easy chair, next to a cylinder of oxygen which had become his third lung, he talked less of his physical pain and the nearness of his going away, and more about the collapse of values in our society, after their systematic destruction by those that have been calling themselves leaders.

A couple of days before the end came, one saw him wondering aloud, with great sadness, about the future of our country, which he thought was heading for anarchy.

Go in Peace, dear Shiri. This beloved country of yours would change, for the better, and we pray you would be able to witness it, from wherever you have gone. ■

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Narmada, World Bank and Inhuman Bondage

SMRUTI KOPPIKAR

With the World Bank withdrawing support to the Sardar Sarovar Project on the Narmada the Government of India's announcement that it would itself finance the project, might spell new problems for the people affected. Here is a comprehensive coverage by the perceptive Senior Correpondent of The Statesman.

—Editor

As March drew to a close, the Gujarat Finance Minister, Chhabildas Mehta, made a significant announcement in his Budget speech: the resource-starved State had finally allocated Rs 100 crores for the Rs 300-crore Narmada pipeline project, a scheme that would supply water to the traditionally drought-hit regions of Saurashtra and Kachch in the shortest possible time.

Less than a week later came the Union Government's decision to suspend further World Bank aid to the Rs 10,000-crore Sardar Sarovar Project on the Narmada, a project meant to be the State's lifeline but entangled in a net of delays, controversies and politics.

The import of Mehta's announcement was drowned in the din created by the decision on World Bank funding. Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar have become centres of heated debates for Narmada is not just a river. To the people of Gujarat, the river is an issue as volatile as Ayodhya is for the nation.

They have been led to believe—over the last four decades—that harnessing the Narmada's waters through the Sardar Sarovar Project will bring prosperity to the State. Not quite inaccurate but the inescapable fact is that tied to the progress of the project is many a politician's career.

When the impassioned debates—from either side—on the World Bank funding issue cool off, someone may ask why Rs 100 crores will be spent on a project that will only duplicate the function of the Sardar Sarovar Project. A fact-sheet brought out by the executive authority, the Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Limited, in May 1992 clearly shows that "drinking-water benefits" in Saurashtra and Kachch are more widespread and exceed the "irrigation benefits". For instance, in Kachch alone, the drinking-water benefits will reach 10.5 lakh people in 948 villages while the irrigation benefits will accrue to only 90,000 people in 73 villages.

If a Rs 300-crore-project to lift water straight from the Narmada over the Gulf of Cambay was all that was required to provide succour to the parched lips of Kachch, why did successive Gujarat Governments make the hapless people wait for four decades with the mirage of the Sardar Sarovar Dam their only hope? The Nigam Chairman, P.A. Raj, assured that the Narmada pipeline project will not be infructuous once the Sardar Sarovar Project is complete. But if one

GUJARAT GOVT PACKAGE

- Five acres of land to every project-affected family including land to landless agricultural labourers' sons who attained major status on January 1, 1987 and to encroachers.
- Free household plot measuring 500 sq.m.
- Rs 10,000 for construction of plinth at this site and Rs 2000 for roof tiles.
- Free transport of household goods to the R and R site.
- The R and R site will be provided with basic amenities like electricity, approach and internal roads, wells and handpumps, schools and health centre.
- The PAPS will be provided temporary tin shed accommodation at the R and R site.
- Subsistance allowance of Rs 4500 to every family in the first year of resettlement.
- A grant of Rs 5000 to every family for purchasing agricultural implements and Rs 600 for ploughing or tractorising their fields.

digs deeper to find convincing arguments for the pipeline project—which may very well be a White Elephant a few years hence—one stumbles across an extensive network of bureaucrats and politicians who swear by the "World Bank".

That the World Bank chose to throw its financial weight behind the Sardar Sarovar Project—at a time when studies on its diverse implications were not yet complete—has been touted by the Nigam as a ringing endorsement of its objectives, policies and even, style of functioning. "World Bank" is a common refrain in all Nigam publications justifying the need for such a project: "World Bank says...the benefits of Sardar Sarovar Project are so large that they substantially outweigh the costs of the immediate human and environmental disruption...The project will have a greater impact on poverty..."

Thus, the World Bank, besides providing financial support, also invested the Narmada authorities with an awesome degree of credibility and legitimacy. Especially with mounting opposition from anti-Dam activists and a section of the public, the Bank's cloak of respect was as important to the Nigam as the $532-million loan. Even a week after saying no to World Bank funds, the Nigam Office was preparing to mail an 'opinion booklet' produced by a local journalist o "important people within and outside the country". The booklet contained a self-addressed card on which the "important Person" is supposed o indicate his support for the project. The 35-page booklet juxtaposes the World Banks' arguments for the project against those of its ritics throughout its lavishly produced pages.

Therefore, although Raj may say that he is not disturbed by its (the Bank's) departure" and the Minister for Narmada, Babubhai Patel, may ssert that the abrupt end to the relationship is "not a setback", it is clear that for due completion, he Sardar Sarovar Project needs the World ank. And, not just financially.

But the government's decision to discontinue World Bank funds has come at a crucial juncture r the Nigam and the Gujarat Government. They are faced with the stoicism and stubbornness tribals in six villages that are likely to be ubmerged in the monsoon two months from w. The anti-Dam Narmada Bachao Andolan ys that at least 200 families will be affected hen the Narmada waters flood the six villages—Manibeli in Maharashtra and five others in Gujarat.

The two State Governments have launched an intensive round of efforts to persuade the protesting villagers to abandon their homes for a resettlement site—something they could not achieve for the last two years.

The pre-monsoon activity acquires an edge this year since the frenetic construction of the Dam has raised its height to 61 m from 33 m last year. This was confirmed by the Chief Engineer, B.J. Parmar. In Manibeli and Vadgam (Gujarat), on opposite banks of the river, houses and farms at the lowest levels are at about 51 m making them virtual death-traps if the Narmada rises during the rains. The Narmada Bachao Andolan knows it only too well and it is planning a satyagraha with the "*Samarpit Dal*" (Suicide Squad) comprising villagers and activists readying themselves for a *jal samadhi.*

The governments and the Nigam also know the consequences of being a party, however unwilling, to the *jal samadhi.* The Minister for Narmada is confident that "Manibeli is not a problem, we won't let them drown".

But daggers have been drawn.

While authorities say there are "may be one or six to seven" huts in the village, the Andolan insists that there are about 60. In fact, the Nigam has found a way around this. Senior officials including Raj said that the monsoon would cause merely a "temporary bondage", not submergence, in these villages. Notwithstanding the World Bank conditions on this issue, the all-powerful Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal of 1979 states that "there is no distinction between temporary and permanent submergence as far as resettlement and rehabilitation was concerned". But the permanence will depend on whether the Nigam decides to close down the ten construction sluices at the Dam—a decision that awaits the Maharashtra Government's nod, expected sometime in early May.

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PARVETA village is a two-hour drive from Baroda. It is one of the earliest resettled villages with oustees of the Sardar Sarovar Project living here for the last seven years. There are two Parvetas—one in Gujarat, the other in

Maharashtra—home to oustees of the two States.

The Gujarat Parveta has about 40 families uprooted from Gadher while the other one houses about 190 families mostly from Manibeli in Maharashtra. All are tribals who were made to vacate their land—some by force—in the Narmada valley they had held for generations. There was compensation but seven years later, they are still awaiting full benefits of the "liberal resettlement and rehabilitation package" promised by the project authorities.

While some like Kanubhai (with a six-member family) possess the promised five acres, others like the old widow, Bhavni Baman, were tricked into accepting one plot after having approved another—often a better one—to the Nigam authorities. Most say that the land is arid and unfit for even one crop of Tuvar once a year. Over the past few years, residents of the Gujarat Parveta have petitioned the Nigam authorities in Baroda repeatedly. Still, the village has token electric supply and a school building, and some tribals like Raman who were landless in Gadher are now landowners.

About 30 Manibeli families re-settled here are so tired and desperate that they are planning to return and join the satyagraha that will be offered during the monsoon by their former neighbours who refused to vacate the village.

These despairing faces have been reduced to statistics in the files of the R and R Department of the Nigam, statistics meant to prove its commitment to the R and R Policy which, till now, paved the way for credit from the World Bank. By its own conservative estimate, more than a lakh of tribals from 245 villages (193 in Madhya Pradesh, 33 in Maharashtra and 19 in Gujarat) will be displaced by the project. This does not include those who will have to give up their land for the main canal. Almost none of these tribals can be termed beneficiaries of this particular "temple of progress"—the one criteria that can perhaps explain the cost of displacement.

Over the years, however, R and R Policy and implementation has become crucial to the multi-crore project. Though Joshi Pura, a consultant to the Nigam, can afford to say that "there are many factors in deciding the construction schedule and resettlement is only one of them", the R and R Policy and package became the most important conditions for the World Bank financial aid to the project. This, especially after the independent review and the Morse Committee Report which forced the World Bank to lay down "performance benchmarks" in October last year.

On October 23, the World Bank Board voted narrowly to continue funding the project and the Bank President, Lewis Preston, is on record saying that "the Directors stressed the point that all the benchmarks must be met to justify continuation of the support beyond six months".

Nigam officials say that the benchmarks should have been stringently adhered to from day one. But the Nigam did not—and the World Bank looked the other way until the independent review forced a few donor countries to reconsider their financial contribution to the Bank.

So the Nigam and the Centre did not cherish the idea of another World Bank review scheduled for April. The Nigam authorities, the Gujarat Government and some pro-Dam NGOs like Arch Vahini have challenged the very basis and veracity of the Morse Committee Report but that does not stop them from feeling relieved at having the Bank off their backs. Even as the Gujarat Minister for Narmada, Babubhai Patel, is groping for financial support for the project, he says: "The Bank goes on examining us as if we are culprits, I do not want this approach."

The Nigam Chairman, P.A. Raj, is emphatic that the authorities will now have "more freedom". He said: "We will not go to the Bank again because we have to face the same music. We have to go by their standards, here we can live by our own." This "freedom" is what the anti-Dam NGOs and tribals now fear will become a licence for the authorities to do as they please-slacken the pace of R and R work and answer critics with increased repression.

"The very definition of Project Affected Person (PAPS) is widening because of various changes and the dynamics of the process," said Ashok Chawla, Managing Director.

The linkage factor ensures that the Dam height (therefore the construction) keeps pace with the R and R so that the oustees have been resettled for at least a year before their villages are submerged. This "operational linkage" has been violated, according to Shripad Dharmadhikary of the Narmada Bachao Andolan. In six other villages where flooding is expected at least 200 families opposing the Dam are still living.

At the sprawling Kevadia Colony built near the Dam site for the Nigam staff, the R and R package for the oustees of the six villages has not been fully implemented so far.

But the strongest indictment of the authorities comes in the first two benchmarks set by the World Bank. Essentially a reiteration of what was set out in the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal Award 13 years ago, the benchmarks ask for "improvement data describing the number of PAPS in the reservoir area" and "completion of comprehensive R and R plans for all the three States". Seven years after the Bank began funding the project, it realised that there wasn't a comprehensive R and R plan. What's worse is that four decades after the Sardar Sarovar Project was conceived, there isn't a comprehensive plan for the oustees. In fact, the Andolan has consistently said that the PAPS have never been consulted on any aspect, even R and R.

In all, about 6500 PAPS have so far been resettled at a total cost of Rs 86 crores. But the authorities' attitude towards R and R is revealing when one considers the composition of the monitoring agency: the three independent agencies for three States (like the Tata Institute for Social Sciences for Maharashtra) report to and are governed by the Narmada Control Authority—the supreme body for implenting the project and, of course, the R and R package.

When the Supreme Gourt designated a special body to report to it, the R and R implementation, it turned out to be a sub-group of the Narmada Control Authority.

The NGOs, both pro-Dam and anti-Dam, agree that monitoring R and R will now become more difficult and they have to somehow take on the task that the World Bank was doing, however honestly or half-heartedly.

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BLOCK NUMBER 12 in Gandhinagar, the landscaped political capital of Gujarat, has an influence of its own. The multi-storeyed structure, a stone's throw from the State Assembly, is the nerve-centre of the controversial Sardar project. The project has become a matter of chauvinistic prestige for Gujarat, and key officials in Block No. 12 have an unbelievably strong financial and political hold over the State Assembly and the Chimanbhai Patel Government. Here in Gandhinagar, the Narmada is not a river, it is a ministerial and administrative department, employing more than 10,000 people.

The boardroom of Block No. 12 has in the past two weeks witnessed several deliberations on the economic and financial implications of the decision to suspend the World Bank loan for the project. The political bosses, including P.V. Narasimha Rao—who visited Ahmedabad within days of the decision—have made statements ranging from sheer bravado to pure optimism about pumping money into the multi-crore project.

The Nigam officials are more cautious. The Chairman, P.A. Raj, said: "We didn't want to lose it (the World Bank loans)," but the young and suave Managing Director, Ashok Chawla, is more forthright. During an interview to this newspaper last week, he admitted that "it will be a hand-to-mouth existence now".

The disparity in sentiment extends to financial areas also. While the Minister for Narmada, Babubhai Patel, maintained that the total project cost now stood at Rs 9000 crores, Chawla said that it would be Rs 10,000 crores. This when the World Bank pegged it at Rs 13,500 crores (Staff Appraisal Report of 1985) and the C.C. Patel report of 1987 asserted the cost would be Rs 11.145 crores. Patel was Chairman of the Nigam for two years during which he parroted the "official" figure of Rs 6406 crores arrived at in the early eighties. For good measure the Narmada Bachao Andolan has worked out a figure of Rs 22,000 crores.

The entire project comprises 30 large dams (including the controversial Sardar Sarovar and the Narmada Sagar in Madhya Pradesh), 125 medium projects and 3000 small irrigation works across the Narmada. Among these, the Sardar Sarovar has been the most romanticised one—designed to irrigate 1.8 million hectares of arid Gujarat land and provide Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra with 1450 MW of power.

The romance and the promise of a better tomorrow have been sold over and over again during the last four decades to the people of Gujarat, especially those in the perenially drought prone regions of Saurashtra and Kachch. The Nigam has relied on the significance of the promise and its political implications to appropriate a more-than-healthy budget as support for the project. The allocation in 1989-90 was Rs 200 crores, but the current budget estimates have kept aside Rs 900 crores for the Sardar Sarovar Project—a sum more than what Maharashtra will spend on all its irrigation projects this year.

The decision on World Bank funding has put both the Gujarat Government and the Nigam in a tight spot. There is little scope to increase the budgetary support. Considering that Rs 840 crores of the Rs 2425 crores (approximately one-third) spent so far came from the World Bank loans, the Nigam is obliged to scrounge every nook and cranny for every crore. Hence, the frenetic activity to float the Narmada bonds and the NRI bonds at the earliest. Whether or not they fructify, the Gujarat Government plans to initiate the "let the beneficiary pay" scheme.

The Minister for Narmada is toying with the idea of charging every beneficiary farmer Rs 1000 per hectare to raise Rs 4500 crores but he is careful to put in a caveat: "We cannot expect all of them to pay, they can contribute their mite." This knowing the political implications of asking an electorate to pay for a benefit that will accrue in the year 2000 at the earliest. Chimanbhai Patel's suggestion to de-link the power sector from the project will ease off some financial burden from the Nigam.

Chawla prophesied: "We have to beg, borrow or steal to complete the project, we can think of the interest burden later and bear it a little longer." Jay Narayan Vyas, a chartered accountant, is categorical that "where costs are concerned, the project has already gone into a tailspin". Prof A.N. Oza of the Economics Department at the India Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, has studied the project for years. He is not convinved of the economics of this project. He suggested pruning down the project to save on time, cost and the human-environment impact.

If, after Gujarat has committed financial harakiri, the Narmada Sagar Dam in Madhya Pradesh is stalled for lack of funds—the Nigam officials concede this as a strong possibility—the efficacy of the Sardar Sarovar will decline. Its irrigation capacity decreases by nearly 18 per cent and the power production capacity by 20 per cent. If the Sardar Sarovar Project already seems like the perfect case for future financial deadwood—or dead concrete—consider its opportunity cost. In other words, the number of irrigation opportunities lost.

The Dam has cut heavily into the State irrigation budget, which is left with sometimes as little as 20 per cent for other projects in the State, according to a department official. Nearly 125 medium and small projects, particularly in the drought-prone regions of Saurashtra and Kachch, have seen minimal progress while some ongoing projects in Saurashtra have come to a standstill. The annual budgetary provision for irrigation projects here has been in the region of Rs 50 crores only.

If any more instances of the skewed priorities of funding are needed, here they are: The 1991-92 Budget provided for a mere Rs 92 crores for irrigation facilities in the area not covered by the Sardar Sarovar command area while the gigantic project was provided with Rs 582 crores. Economists in the State calculate that a little more than Rs 1000 crores will be needed to complete the small and medium schemes that will go a long way in solving the water crisis but none of them has the romanticism or political backing of the Sardar Sarovar.

Worse still, after starving other, perhaps more useful, projects of funds, there are serious misgivings about the reach of the Sardar Sarovar into the drought-prone areas. How much of the water in the Dam will reach Saurashtra and Kachch will depend on how and when the canal is completed. This, the Nigam Chairman said, would cost another Rs 3000 crores.

Increasingly, politicians from this region are voicing their misgivings about the multi-crore Dam. The present Finance Minister, in his capacity as Water Supply Minister in the previous Cabinet, demanded "reallocation of water from the Narmada project to irrigate the thirsty lands in north Gujarat, Saurashtra and Kachch." Chhabbildas Mehta said that the "present allocation was unjust" and would accentuate the regional disparties.

The politics of the past 40 years, however, has deemed that the Sardar Sarovar Project will be in place, if not by 1998 then at least by 2025. Never mind if the cost-benefit ratio becomes negative by then. The lion Sardar Patel would certainly not have approved of this. As if to underscore the point, the boardroom in Block No. 12 bears a huge portrait of the Sardar looking none too happy. ■

(Courtesy: *The Statesman*)

Effect of Industrial and Trade Policy Changes in India

SUKHPAL SINGH

The economic policies play an important role in growth by way of directing it in the desirable direction and promoting it in general. Basically there were three spheres of economic policy—monetary, fiscal and commercial (trade)—but due to the growth of economies and increased role of the state, today there are sector-specific policies as well (as, for example, agricultural, industrial, trade, etc. besides the monetary and fiscal policies which affect all sectors in different ways).

In India, the debate on economic policies has been resumed recently due to the problems of balance of payments, inflation, industrial recession and the consequent recent programme of structural reforms as desired by the donor agencies (World Bank and IMF) and countries like the USA. Though the recent crisis has been declared as a national crisis, the analysis of the government policies and performance for the decade of the 1980s shows that it is basically a crisis of the management of government.

> We mismanaged macro-economically in the 1980s and compounded the error by liberalising imports before restoring a better fiscal and monetary balance. ....It is because successive governments in the 1980s chose to abdicate their responsibility to the nation for the sake of short-term partisan political gains and indeed out of sheer political cynicism. (Patel, 1991)

The situation as it has developed now is the result of mismanagement of the economy by the successive governments in the 1980s. This is important to point out so that the new policies can be judged in the proper perspective.

The recent policies, though advertised as new, are not really very new. We have had devaluation earlier also in 1949 and 1966, as we had measures like import liberalisation, export promotion, delicensing of industry and the like. Thus what is new is the pace and the impulses behind the changes. The new policies can be analysed by putting them into two categories: (1) Devaluation and Trade Policy changes; and (2) Industrial Policy changes. It is important to remember that all these changes concern only the industrial and trade sectors. The sectors of agriculture and services have been left out conveniently. That also suggests that the changes are not from within but dictated by compulsions.

The author is a Professor at the Institute of Rural Management, Anand (Gujarat). This is the text of a paper presented at a national seminar on "India's New Economic Policy" at the Punjabi University Regional Centre, Bhatinda (Punjab) on March 6-7, 1993.

Devaluation and Trade Policies

The purpose of devaluation is to encourage exports and discourage imports by making exports cheaper in the international market and imports costlier for the home market, in order to improve the trade balance, and, in turn, the balance of payments situation. However, it is important to recognise that devaluation is only one among the many determinants of export performance. There are other factors like the relative price elasticity of exported goods, the quality of goods exported, devaluation by rival countries, nature of the world trade, and export incentives which are very essential in trade performance. Now although the rupee has been devalued by more than 20 per cent, side by side the government has withdrawn the export subsidy too. On top of it, the government has liberalised imports, which is a self-contradicting step in policy because with the devaluation of the rupee imports have become costlier and these costlier imports will make industrial production costlier, thereby sending a wave of inflation within the economy and in turn making exports again uncompetitive since most of our export-oriented industries are import intensive in their production. Thus costlier imports will further enhance the already high-cost domestic industrial structure. It is true that the import dependence of the Indian industry in general has increased after the mid-1970s (Malhotra and Raikhy, 1988, and Mani, 1991).

Not only has the export performance of the manufacturing sector proper been unimpressive, but also the increase in export earnings looks impressive only when it is viewed in rupee terms. However, the real indication will be their value in foreign currencies which may not have increased significantly due to the devaluation of the rupee.

The export earnings of the corporate sector were less than their import bill (expenditure of foreign exchange) during the period 1978-79 to 1983-84, which points to a net outflow of foreign exchange reserves (Kurien, 1988). The problem of balance of payments (trade) is further complicated by growing protectionism, sluggish world trade, price and quality competitiveness in the international market, and the globalisation of production and technology (Jalan, 1993 and Housego, 1993).

Industrial Policies

The rationale behind the new industrial policy which promotes liberalisation, privatisation and free market is that it will bring growth with efficiency and thus the Indian industry will become internationally competitive. The objective is fair but the conditions under which this is being proposed to be done are not favourable. The delicencing and entry of the MNCs in industry will create competition for the domestic producer who will not be able to withstand it and thus the MNCs will grab the domestic markets. The organised industrial sector which is already under recession/stagnation may not be able to bear this attack. This will have serious implications on the employment situation because, as experience shows, the annual growth rate of employment in the organised industrial sector has been much lower (1.36 per cent) and zero/negative for the manufacturing part of it during the 1980s than in the 1970s (2.42 per cent). On the other hand, the industrial output in this sector has grown at much higher rates (6.8 per cent per annum) compared to only three to five per cent during the 1970s.*

This reflects on the increasingly capital-intensive nature of industrial production in recent years. It has serious dimensions because the growth rate of employment in the agricultural sector has also been declining. It came down to 0.07 per cent in 1988 from that of 1.8 per cent in 1973. Not only that, the new policies and environment have led to mounting labour troubles. The magnitude of strikes and lockouts was much larger during 1976-90 (14.7 days strikes and 64 days lockouts/year) than during 1961-75 (8.8 days and 28 days respectively). (Datt, 1993)

This at a time when the agricultural sector will render more and more people unemployed in the coming years, and the industrial sector with the new environment will refuse to accommodate this workforce because as Papola (1989) argues:

> A very major restructuring involving technological upgradation and modernisation, and closure of sick units is likely to lead to redundancy on a scale which even a high rate of industrial growth may not be able to absorb. If export promotion is to be emphasised, the restructuring required would again be of a highly labour saving kind. In any case, the cost of a large-scale dislocation of workers and further reduction in employment potential of industrial development need to be considered in relation to the benefits of restructuring, particularly in the sectors where it is planned with international competitiveness in view. (p. 79)

This will be further aggravated due to the policy on the small scale sector.

In the new policy the small scale sector, which is the source of employment for millions of people, has been victimised because many areas reserved for this sector are being dereserved and the large companies and MNCs are being allowed to enter the small scale sector. Thus, on the employment front, the scenario is bleak because the new policy will promote capital-intensive growth.

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THE impact of the new economic policies on employment and other desirable goals can be summed up in Sandesara's words as follows:

> What is there in the NIPP for social objectives, is, to put it no more strongly, by and large, little. (Sandesara, 1991)

Kurien (1988) also strikes a pessimistic note about the situation when he says:

> The review of the economy in the 1980s thus shows that the widely publicised policy measures frequently referred to as "the new economic policy" may not be achieving their objective even in their limited sphere while they show a very inadequate appreciation of the real nature of our problems at this stage. It is with such a double burden that the Indian economy moves on to the 1990s. (p. 34)

Further, in this process of policy changes, the rural sector of the economy has been bypassed.

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* It is a different matter that C.T. Kurien doubts this statement and evidence about higher growth rates of industrial production and remarks: "What is presented as a sudden spurt in industrial production in the mid-eighties must be thought of as arising from wider coverage of industries and reallocation of weights rather than from technological progress, improvement in productivity or better utilisation of capacity. The late Daniel Thorner once referred to 'agricultural revolution through census redefinition'. We may be passing through a similar experience in the sphere of industry in the eighties." (Kurien, 1988, p. 20)

The agricultural sector has been deprived of fertiliser subsidy without any positive step, cooperatives have been left untouched and the outlay earmarked for rural development and social services has been reduced in real terms. It is a fact that the investment (capital formation) in agriculture has been declining in the 1980s, which is largely due to the lack of public sector investment since it is necessary to promote private investment in agriculture. Its consequences could be quite serious in the long run. (Shetty, 1990, and Kumar, 1992)

But, still the burden of structural reforms will be borne by these rural and poor strata of society as is evident from the recent foodgrain-price-inspired inflationary process in the economy. Though the inflation has come down to the single digit level in the recent past, that is no great relief because, as Manu Shroff puts it,

> this is by no means a tolerable rate given the poverty and maldistribution of incomes. (Shroff, 1988)

That inflation costs jobs (employment) has been demonstrated by the experience of many countries around the world. (*The Economist,* 1992)

Further, the reduced linkages between agriculture and industry wherein the dependence of industry on agriculture has declined, means that the attention focussed on the industrial sector will not benefit the rural sector to a large extent. That even policy-makers are biased in favour of industry is reflected in a statement by Shroff:

> It is not often realised that industry, with barely 20 per cent share in national output, claims perhaps 80 per cent of the time of policy-makers (and even of economists, including those who speak on current policy issues!). (Shroff, 1988, p. 19)

Perhaps the country is being made to pay for the 'structural adjustment' of 10 per cent of the population and those of the international agencies (World Bank and IMF) in the name of the national crisis, though it is a crisis of bad management of the economy.

This will lead to the perpetuation of the already existing inequalities in income and levels of living. The inequality is so glaring that the annual income per wage and salary earner in the organised sector in 1981 was Rs 10,851--more than four times that in the unorganised sector (Rs 2482) and within the latter, the agricultural worker was drawing about one-third of the non-agricultural worker. (Lakdawala, 1988) Even Dr I.G. Patel is of the following view:

> A society, as unequal as ours, simply cannot afford to regard distribution merely as an offshoot of development. (Patel, 1991, p. 6)

Thus, the new economic policies which have already led to an upper middle-class-oriented pattern of development, will lead to "dependent development" because as Shetty (1988) observes, this pattern of development under the pressure and machinations of the changed international environment has made it impossible to think or dream of any other method/pattern than dependent development. ■

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Sri Lankan Impressions

Athulathmudali and Premadasa

ANIRUDHA GUPTA

The security cordon around Sri Lankan Parliament is a far more elaborate affair than anything I have seen elsewhere in South Asia. The security points in New Delhi are manned by people who are incredibly rude in their behaviour but equally inefficient in work. Their counterparts in Colombo are incredibly efficient but mild in behaviour.

I was thorougly searched from head to foot at three checkpoints before I could reach the last one where I was asked to surrender my passport, my wristwatch and even the ball-pen. Inside the House a Muslim MP from Batticaloa was hitting out at the government for its failure to prevent the massacre of some 40 Muslim villagers by the LTTE. In reply, Prime Minister D.B. Wijetunge, now sworn in as the President, blamed the entire Opposition for hampering the government's anti-insurgency operation.

Yet, I detected an element of duality in President Premadasa's handling of the island's major political problems. Being a man of modest origins, he disliked the urban-based, educated, upper-class Sinhalese. Any criticism of his policies in the Sinhala and English-language press provoked an unusually excessive reaction from him.

"There is nothing like freedom of the press," confided the young editor of an English weekly. "The President keeps a tight control over the official media, but owners of the so-called independent papers too start perspiring as soon they hear his name."

Being personally disadvantaged during the early parts of his political career, Premadasa developed a sort of personal grudge against his senior, and better-placed, colleagues in the United National Party (UNP) such as Lalith Athulathmudali and Gamini Dissanayake, who finally left the party to found the Democratic United National Front (DUNF).

I met Lalith Athulathmudali when he was Minister of Interior and one of President Jayewardene's trusted colleagues. Brilliant, Oxford-trained, Athulathmudali held me fascinated as he traced the various stages of negotiations between the government and the Tamil parties on the subject of provincial autonomy. He was quite willing to consider Jaffna's autonomy, short of total severance from the island. But he ruled out such a possibility in regard to the eastern province: "Our people will not accept it; nor have you been too generous to sub-nationalist and regional demands in India."

Athulathmudali did not strike me as pathologically anti-Indian nor something of a bloodthirsty ogre as the Indian media had painted him to be.

I told him as much, and he began to laugh. "You know," he outlined an interesting theory, "Our ancestors came from what must have been a stretch between Bengal, Orissa and eastern parts of Bihar. These are also the provinces which stay most depressed and backward in India. Yet at one time, they played a central role in History. Why, look at the Bengalis and their contributions to education and the nationalist movement!"

And he added: "These people are treated today as marginal by New Delhi's ruling establishment. So they get neither a good press nor a proper coverage of their problems. Tracing my ancestors, I can understand why I also carry the mark of Cain."

When Lalith Athulathmuladi was shot dead (April 23), I was greatly upset. I couldn't believe, despite propaganda by interested quarters, that he was killed by the LTTE. For the LTTE's death squads are known to use "human bombs" to blow up their victims as they did to Rajiv Gandhi at Sriperumbudur and President Premadasa in Colombo (May 1). Murder by pistol shots is more or less in line with the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi (1948), by a Hindu fanatic, and of Prime Minister Solomon W.R.D. Bandaranaike (1959), by a Buddhist fanatic.

Even then there are grounds to suspect some official connections in Athulathmudali's murder.

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First, President Premadasa was known to have raised "killer squads" to intimidate and sometime use violence against his opponents. Second, the election campaign for the May 17 Provincial Councils generated an unexpectedly large popular support for the DUNF. It is quite likely that some unnamed quarters close to the President wanted the DUNF's leading star, Lalith Athuladmudali, to be removed.

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THESE are speculations. But why should President Premadasa be physcially liquidated by the LTTE? He was known to be remarkably flexible in his attitude to Tamil militants. He did not welcome, as the Prime Minister, the arrival of the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka's north. On the IPKF's departure in 1990, he reined in the Sri Lankan forces from storming the LTTE strongholds. Besides, he kept the room open to entice the LTTE to the negotiating table. For many Sinhalese, Premadasa's apparently contradictory posture *vis-a-vis* the Tamil militants appeared somewhat of a mystery. In an article in the *Economic and Political Weekly* (September 19, 1992), I offered an explanation:

> It suits Premadasa's purpose if the Tigers reign supreme in the north and Vavuniya jungles... It would not matter if an outright killers' outfit eliminates rival Tamil organisations, or launches unprovoked attacks on minority Muslim Tamils, and widens its organisational network in southern India. The first rules out any political settlement with a killers' gang. The second helps to bring the dispossessed Muslims under Colombo's protection, and the third can only embarrass India... Hence, so long as the Tigers are in control, Jaffna can carry on without electricity, with precious little fuel and with the 'Voice of the Tigers' radio blaring out the separatist message.

It is quite possible that in choosing his victims, Velupillai Prabhakaran seldom took notice of who was more reasonable or who appeared to be less dangerous towards his organisation. Months before his assassination, Rajiv Gandhi was reported to have met two LTTE emissaries. Why did they meet him? Just to lull his suspicion about their activities, or was there something more? Again, it was reported in the Sri Lankan press that President Premadasa was trying to get in touch with the LTTE supremo. Was that the reason for the latter to strike?

As a shrewd politician, Premadasa utilised the JVP's radical slogans for his own political ends. By giving the appearance that he was opposed to the IPKF, he stole away the JVP's call for "liberation of the motherland". At the same time, he focused attention on his own lowly social origins to cultivate the JVP's disillusioned supporters. But he also played up the predominantly Buddhist sentiment of the islanders in order to project himself as a protector of "the land, the race, and the faith" of the Sinhala masses.

For a time, his brand of populism did seem to antagonise the urbanised middle class. But Premadasa took care to appease the acquisitive instinct of this class. Most taxes were reduced, import rules liberalised, and banks were told to invite foreign collaboration. Premadasa, said one journalist, was trying to act as a Pope of capitalism.

A truncated Pope perhaps; and in a truncated island. Nevertheless, Premadasa devoutly wished to be all things to all people; *aut Caesar aut nihil*—either Ceasar or nothing! ■

Just Published

ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC SURVEY

There is no denying that the official Economic Survey has acquired quite a few apologetic traits. Over the years, it has tended to be more of a window-dressing than reporting objectively and meaningfully the state of the Indian economy. The manner in which the economy affects the lives of the common man is rarely captured in the official Survey. Hence, we felt that with all the limitations in terms of information, expertise, manpower and time constraints, an attempt should be made to prepare an Alternative Economic Survey. The Survey includes a number of aspects which are neglected in the official Survey. We have examined various public policies and suggested alternative packages. The current context of the Structural Adjustment Programme has provided a common link.

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ITALY

Implications of Struggle against Corruption

MADHU DANDAVATE

Whatever be the fate of globalisation of the economy, globalisation of corruption and forging of nexus between the mafia and the politician is already on everywhere. Against this background, the crackdown on the entrenched nexus between the mafia and the political elite of Italy, and on widespread corruption is a development of great significance. Many top-ranking politicians have been charged with bribery, scandals and mafia connections. The steps Italian authorities have taken during the last 14 months against these two evils have unnerved the dark forces which were holding sway for decades together.

Italy's rendezvous with crime and politics suddenly made world news in March 1978 when in Rome the Red Brigade terrorist group kidnapped and murdered the Italian Prime Minister, Aldo Moro. Although Mario Moretti, head of the Red Brigade, was imprisoned for the crime, the motive behind the murder remained shrouded in mystery. It was suspected that some outside forces might have used the Red Brigade to get Moro eliminated when he was trying to reach an understanding with the Italian Communist Party in the late 1970s.

However, the nexus between criminals and politicians remained a fact of life in Italian politics during the last three decades. Sicily and Naples were the springboards of their activities. They could do it with impunity because all of them had forged strong and clandestine links with the ruling political elite in Rome, cutting across political parties. They exchanged votes and money for protection and favours, and many national politicians became partners in this crime. The state of this despicable tie-up reached its crescendo when the investigating magistrates of Italy announced that the Christian Democratic leader, Giulio Andreotti, seven times Prime Minister of Italy, was under investigation for his links with mafia gangs, and requested the Italian Parliament to put an end to his parliamentary immunity from prosecution so that he could be put on trial for his links with the mafia. Two other Christian Democratic Ministers placed under investigation for their suspected mafia activities were Antonio Gava and Paolo Cirino Pomicino. Gava was the leader of the Christian Democratic Party in the Senate.

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THE crackdown on the mafia began when the Sicilian mafia gunned down Salvatore Lima, a powerful politician of Sicily and a close aide of the former Prime Minister, Giulio Andreotti. The man who masterminded this murder was Ignazio Salvo, a member of the Cosa Nostra mafia clan headed by Salvatore "Toto" Riina. Two anti-mafia judges in Palermo—Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino—imprisoned Ignazio Salvo. In their report, the two judges said that the ruling echelons of the Cosa Nostra ordered the assassination of Lima who functioned as the principal link between Cosa Nostra and the ruling establishment in Rome. Soon after, in retaliation, the Sicilian mafia gunned down both the judges and the wife of Giovanni Falcone in May 1992. The murder of these two upright anti-mafia judges of Palermo caused deep anguish all over Sicily. As a result, from May 1992 onwards people of Sicily came out in the streets in large numbers and demonstrated against the mafia operations.

In December 1992, hundreds of school-children and teachers held demonstrations against the killing of the judges. They accused the local police that it let the mafia leader Riina at large because he was protected by top politicians. Besides, more young people became very active in the anti-mafia Rete Party. Following these expressions of anguish and protest, in January 1993, "Toto" Riina was arrested, marking a turning-point in the move for cleansing Italy of mafia. The investigations are still on to ascertain from Riina on the extent of protection Cosa Nostra received from Italy's top politicians. The nature and extent of connections between the mafia and the former Prime Minister, Andreotti, and his aides is unknown as Andreotti's parliamentary immunity protects him from trial on this count. It is interesting to note that the Parliamentary Committee which dropped the call for Andreotti's trial over his links with the mafia has accepted that his right-hand man in Sicily, Salvo Lima, who was murdered by the mafia, was the conduit between the mafia and the ruling circles in Rome. But the investigating magistrates have insisted that they had a duty to investigate Andreotti's links with Cosa Nostra during his seven terms as the Prime Minister.

As a result of 14 months of investigation by the Italian magistrates, more than 2600 top politicians, which included one-fifth of 630 MPs in the Chamber of Deputies, and top business executives are either under arrest or under investigation for corruption. Among those who face investigation on corruption charges are former Prime Ministers Andreotti, Bettino Craxi, Arnaldo Forlani. In the wake of the investigation, the present Prime Minister, Giuliano Amato, lost three of his Cabinet colleagues who were named by the investigating magistrates for bribery and kickbacks. They include a former Foreign Minister, Gianni de Michelis, and a powerful industrialist, Raul Gardini.

The investigations have generated outrage and public wrath. Recently, Gianni de Michelis was chased by an angry mob in Venice through the back streets. He escaped by jumping into a motor boat and speeding away from the mob. Similarly, when Prime Minister Giuliano Amato, who vainly tried his bit to save some of the corrupt politicians from prison sentences, went to address students of Bocconi University in Milan, he was booed and greeted with shouts of "thieves" and "clowns". Seven top men facing investigation have committed suicide.

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WHAT is happening in Italy should be an eye-opener for India. Ever since the emergence of post-independence India, our nation has been witnessing the gradual evolution of corruption and growing alliance between the mafia and the politicians. It all began in the fifties with the famous Haridas Mundhra scandal about the purchase of shares by the LIC. The import licence scandal rocked the fifth Lok Sabha.

The anti-corruption movement in Bihar and Gujarat blessed by Jayaprakash Narayan demonstrated the rise of youth power against corruption. The politics of 'trusts' ruined the credibility of rulers at the Centre and in one of the States. The Bofors kickback scandal disturbed and displaced many. The Bank Scam involving huge amounts shocked the financial world. And now comes the climax with communalists, criminals, builders and smugglers combining together to make hay while the sun shines. A process of criminalisation of politics and politicisation of criminals is growing at a rapid pace. The mafia and the politician are fast emerging as two sides of the same coin. Maybe Italy with its 'New Dawn' will be a pathfinder for its own people as well as the people of the world at large, including India. In the field of criminalisation and corruption, we are witnessing the darkest hour of the night. Will it be a prelude to a new dawn? ■

(Courtesy: *Indian Express*)

COMMUNICATION

Home Truths of History

In 1975 I had an occasion to visit Pune alongwith some writer friends and had a meeting with the venerable man of letters of Marathi literature, scholar, historian, linguist, *et al.*, Datto Waman Poddar, who was then very well advanced in years and in very indifferent health. I was given to understand that Poddar was engaged in writing a monumental history on the rise and fall of the Maratha power, for which the Government of Maharashtra was providing him financial help. I was also told that the great work was almost complete, but Poddar was reluctant to get that momental work published in his lifetime, as he had found out some very unsavoury aspects of Maratha power which, if published, would cause an uproar.

Poddar died some years back. It is about time that Poddar's research work is published so that some home truths about sanctified individuals of the past see the light of day and some present-day criminals also get exposed.

2087 Qasim Jam Street
Delhi 110006

Iqbal Akhtar

COMMUNICATION

Beyond the Critique of Secularism!

The attempt to re-evaluate the concept of secularism in the context of the review of the book, *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags*, (*Mainstream*, April 3) has come at a moment when the country is still dazed with the violent consequences of the Ayodhya episode. In the background of the blood-curdling reports on the Surat riots by Asghar Ali Engineer, published in the same issue of the magazine, it is difficult to swallow the formulations that equate communalism with secularism on the grounds of an alleged "homogeneous order". In fact, one is reminded of the criticism made against the anti-Church movement in Europe several centuries back, when the dissenting, sectarian Pietists were "trying to pull the chestnuts out of the fire".

The reviewer expresses his doubts: "I am not very sure whether in terms of its exclusivist character, there is fundamentally any difference between the *Organiser* and *People's Democracy*." However, it is interesting to note that the attempt begins with an emphasis on "I", as he says: "*I* accept the book, and request *my* friends to read it. My religiosity is free to welcome this secular exercise." He does not believe in a plural "we", he excludes all others who do not come into the gamut of his "I", the rational caring subject who has the generosity to have "a religiosity", which is free to accept it—the acceptance is based on "reasons", naturally excluding those which are irrational. And the term "reason" also has a dual meaning for him as on the same rational grounds, he attacks secularism, as "it intends to establish the superiority of scientific objectivity".

The knowing "I", as a fixed entity, with its own network of rationalisations, subjects the term "secularism" to a critical assessment: "Its perception of a rational/secular order tends to annihilate all that it cannot comprehend: man's religiosity or his non-linear notion of time." He adds: "Secularism may fail—and fail miserably—to provide meaningful answers to the questions one considers important—the questions related to the meaning of life, its finitude, death, suffering, and pain," and gives his verdict: "Secularism is not as pious as one is asked to believe." After this, one is tempted to say only that "For this 'I', the pious phrases and for the suffering masses, the wrath of the failing Gods." The classical saint of Christianity "mortified his body for the salvation of the souls of the masses", and the modern, educated saint mortifies the "bodies of the masses" for the salvation of his own soul. When babies were raped and crushed on stones, when Imams were forced to say "*Jai Shri Ram*" and then cut into pieces, when old people were burnt alive, one could not wait at the fence. The only alternative left was to take up the cause of pluralism and unity, which our Constitution preambles, with which Prof Sarkar and other authors of the book agree.

Interestingly, the reviewer does not disagree with any of the formulations the book has offered and he even goes on elaborating the points mentioned in the various chapters and hails the attempt as "a remarkable achievement", but he deviates from the review topic in the epilogue and launches a criticism which may be called "unilinear" in character as it excludes the context.

The term secularism, oft repeated in the article, actually connotes tolerance with all religious beliefs, which also means the unity of all communities in the nation-state, irrespective of separate communal religious identities. In no way can it be accused of annihilating the identity of one community at the cost of the other, nor can it be called a forced homogeneity, as it is based on the dialectical unity of the multiple.

The reviewer has lumped together the concept of secularism which is a general principle based on the relationship of man with society and the special form valid at a certain historical phase. Moreover, he stretches it upto the shallow form in which it continues to exist as a dogmatist perception of an obsolete era, without a rational insight into the historical interconnections.

In the present context, secularism is the only voice of dissent against the forced homogeneous "Order" of the majority. Even the paradigm of majority is a misnomer, as every individual has to have access to his own religious belief and true religiosity means a freedom to think, assess and assimilate according to one's own free will without suppressing the other. This freedom has been one of the main ingredients of Indian cultural ethos which was recognised by the builders of the Indian nation and upheld by various streams of Indian philosophical heritage. "Discontents of secularism" are not the part of the concept itself, they are the interruptions emanating from misleading interpretations.

Krishna Jha

Mayur Vihar
New Delhi

In Search of a Dalit Cause

KUMAR SURESH

The idea to appoint Dalits (untouchables) as priests (Shankaracharya) in the temples mooted by the Bihar Chief Minister is being interpreted as a move to counter the *Hindutva* offensive. It is also being seen as a political move to consolidate the electoral base. But whatever may be the compulsions and political motive, this issue sets an alternative agenda for political discourse. It raises some issues which call for retrospective analysis and a fresh consideration.

The foremost important question that comes to our mind is the demands and aspirations of the Dalits in the backward social economy of Bihar. Do the Dalits really want priesthood which hardly touches upon the core issues of their existential condition? Perhaps the younger generation of the Dalits would not be fascinated by the idea of priesthood. They, instead, want equal opportunity in the decision-making process of the State. They aspire equal participation in the socio-economic process of post-independence India. The issue of bread and butter is real and more appealing for them. The religious cooption of Dalits in the traditional *varna* scheme appears inappropriate. Any such move has led to a kind of cooption in the Hindu society and its *varna* scheme even in the past. The movements led by the medieval *Bhakti* saints such as Chokhamela and Raidas in Maharashtra and North India respectively had similar experiences.

Moreover, the case of Bihar has been different from the southern and western Indian States. The caste system in these areas has remained very rigid. In fact, the early twentieth century Hinduism in these States was interpreted by the Sanskritic scholars, *Matadhipathis* (heads of the monastic chapters) and by the Brahmin priestly class, and propagated through the temples and *mutts* (the monastic chapters). Thus there was almost an absolute monopoly of the Brahmins over the Hindu scriptures, rituals, language and cultural symbols. The pattern of social intercourse was defined and determined by the Brahmins. The Brahminical ideological supremacy used to determine the nature of economic, political pattern. Different *jatis* were allocated sacred space in the temple according to the hierarchical gradation of the Hindu society. There was no sacred space for the 'Untouchables' who were considered highly polluting. This exclusion of the 'Untouchables' from the temples went beyond the cultural realms, since economic benefits accruing from temple funds were also confined to caste Hindus. Obviously, the amount of these benefits was related to the *jati*'s social position in the hierarchy.

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Thus cultural inequality occupied the centre position in the overall socio-economic structure of the village life. The other aspects of inequality used to revolve around it. In this situation, it was inevitable to counter the Brahminical ideology through an alternative ideology, idioms and symbols of social life. And that is why cultural radicals like Jyotiba Phule, E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker, Sri Narayana Guru, and many other leaders of the non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu or elsewhere attempted to counter the cultural and ritual hegemony of the Hindu society through stressing moral superiority of the original non-Aryans or Dravidians. In the given social situation they were aware of the fact that the political revolution must be preceded by the religious and social revolution. This was a compulsive demand of the situation.

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IF we consider the case of Bihar, the situation appears to be different. The rigidity of the caste system has been, of course, a reality of life both at the level of consciousness and at the level of existence. However, cultural inequality has hardly been an all-encompassing phenomenon. The

Shabana Azmi's Credo

I've always believed India is a mosaic in which the different pieces retain their identity while contributing to a colourful collage. Instead, a systematic attempt is being made to make it into a melting pot in which individual identities get lost. Identity is many things. My identity is of gender, nationality, region, religion, profession, etc. How can identity be defined by only one of these aspects?

Irrespective of the complexity of identity, one can be secular or communal regardless of whether one is a Hindu or a Muslim. The uneasiness of the communal person makes him justify himself through religion. That is a paradox, for no truly religious person can be communal...

Communalism has to be understood not in its Hindu, Muslim, Sikh variants but as a political ideology. History is being used as political rhetoric, a catalogue of real and imaginary grievances in the form of injustices perpetrated by others...

The term *Hindutva* as propagated by the *Sangh Parivar* is not *Hindutva* at all. The true pall-bearers of *Hindutva* were Shri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and Dr Radhakrishnan. The *Sangh Parivar* is propagating fascism. Each Hindu has to decide for himself whether he will follow the Hinduism of Vivekananda and Gandhiji or that of Sadhvi Rithambara and Ashok Singhal...

For democratic forces the only weapon can be truth. We have to acknowledge that there has been a sense of disquiet among the Hindus which has been manipulated and distorted out of proportion by the *Parivar*. There is need for soul-searching among the Muslims and recognising that some grievances have a genuine basis.

—From Shabana Azmi's interview to Meher Pestonji in **The Illustrated Weekly of India** *(May 1-7, 1993)*

economic arrangement and political considerations have played important roles in the everyday life of the people. Moreover, the monopoly of the upper castes over the cultural and religious life of the people has been opposed by the people of the 'lower rank' in the caste hierarchy. The Arya Samaj, the Shivnarayani sect, the Gorakhpanthi, the Kabirpanthi and numerous other sects have opposed the inequality at the level of culture and religion. Apart from these organised movements, informal protests in the form of ritual resistance in everyday life have also played an important role, though most of the time these aspects of protests from below go unnoticed by the students of social movements.

Secondly, the temples have hardly been a centre of economic and political power. The Brahmins had to share economic and political power with other upper castes like the Bhumihars and Rajputs who have enjoyed more power than the traditional Brahmins under the provisions of the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793. In the post-independence period, Kurmis, Koeris and Yadavs have emerged as a strong force in the political formation of the State. In the emerging socio-economic structure, the Brahmins have neither a monopoly over the economic and political power nor have they any claim over the ideological hegemony derived from the traditional Hindu society.

Under the given situation the idea of priesthood does not appear appropriate. The State-sponsored Sanskritisation cannot bring any substantial change in the existential condition of the Dalits. It does not ensure political and economic power to them. The lack of education, non-enforcement of minimum wages and non-implementation of developmental programmes, etc. are more important issues which can be articulated by the strong will of the government, and it is the basic area where the State can play a crucial role. Moreover, political solutions to social and cultural problems have very limited scope. The cultural protest must come from within and below. ■

We do not believe in a rigid autarchy, but we do want to make India self-sufficient in regard to her needs as far as this is possible. We want to develop international trade, importing articles which we cannot easily produce and exporting such articles as the rest of the world wants from us. We do not propose to submit to the economic imperialism of any other country or to impose our own on others. We believe that the nations of the world can co-operate together in building a world economy which is advantageous for all and in this work we shall gladly co-operate. But this economy cannot be based on the individual profit motive, nor can it subsist within the framework of imperialist system. It means a new world order, both politically and economically, and free nations co-operating together for their own as well as the larger good.

Jawaharlal Nehru

(October 4, 1940)

Sah Brothers

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BOOK REVIEW

Impact of Islam on South Asia

AVIJIT PATHAK

With the advent of modernisation, it was thought, secularism would become a shared life practice all over the world. But history, it seems, follows no rational logic. It surprises us, shatters our progressive assumptions about its linear movements. As a result, we are witnessing religion refusing to accept its defeat or marginality. It is not just man's "private affair" retaining an unbridgeable distance from the secular "public" realm. Instead, religion enters the domain of politics, gives a new meaning to the state and even modern politicians fail to resist its seductive power. It is necessary to understand this phenomenon. And, particularly, a look at South Asia reveals the irresistible power of Islam, its close affinity with politics.

Islam, Politics and Society in South Asia edited by Andre Wink; Manohar, New Delhi; 1991; p. 189; Price: Rs 200.

Andre Wink's book, as a result, becomes important. Because Andre Wink and seven other contributors—and all these authors presented their papers at the Tenth European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies held at Venice in 1988—have sought to understand the politics of Islamisation, particularly in the context of Pakistan and Bangladesh. This slim book, it should, however, be observed, is not just about politics or the socio-economic implications of the process of Islamisation. Reading this book—written in a style that, despite its largely descriptive and informative character, sustains one's interest—is also an occasion to rediscover Mohammad Iqbal or even two contemporary Deccani sufis whose understanding of the "original purity of Islam" is likely to make one critical of many ugly practices going on in the name of religion.

Islam, one knows, has played an important role in the life of Pakistan.. V.N. Moscalenko in his essay recalls the history of Pakistan. According to the Constituent Assembly on General Principles (adopted in 1949, but approved in 1956), the official name of the country was *Islamic Republic of Pakistan*. The supreme power of the Universe, it was mentioned in the Constitution, belongs to *Allah* and the Pakistani people exercise power within the limits set by *Allah*. Yet, as V.N. Moscalenko writes, Pakistan witnessed a conflict between the interest of Ayub Khan's military/bureaucratic machinery and its professed Islamic principles. In fact, even the name of the country was altered from Islamic Republic of Pakistan to just *Republic of Pakistan*! But after the Martial Law was removed in 1962 Pakistan once again retained its original name and divergent Islamic forces began to occupy an important space in the political life of Pakistan. The Constitution declared Islam a state religion and even Z.A. Bhutto, his "modernist" outlook notwithstanding, imagined a "symbiosis of Islamic and socialist ideas in the form of Islamic socialism".

Beneath these Islamic slogans, Andre Wink writes, lay an attempt to bridge the gap between the Westernised political elite and the religious leadership of the *Ulama*. But all these concessions to Islâm did have only a "cosmetic value" because, to quote Andre Wink, "instead of allowing the *Ulama* to govern, the Pakistani Government sought a compromise with them on constitutional principles and indulged in the rhetoric of Islamic socialism, 'Islamic economics' and so on".

But it was Zia-ul-Haq who was the first Pakistani leader who ostensibly aimed at the complete Islamisation of state and society. As V.N. Moscalenko writes, with Zia "influential *Ulama* and the religious communal parties became the military's political allies". "The army," to quote V.N. Moscalenko, "was no longer a corporate group; it was an integral part of the single State-religious structure; its declared mission was to defend Pakistan's borders and ideology."

For the first time in Pakistan's history the communalist *Jamaat-i-Islami* party was directly and formally admitted to office. In fact, Zia's close association with Maulana Maududi, the

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founder of the *Jamaat-i-Islami*, was clearly visible. As a matter of fact, Andre Wink's brilliantly argued essay, "The Islamisation of Pakistan and Its International Context", seeks to locate the process of Islamisation in the specific historicity of Pakistan. First, with the growing regional resurgence of Sindhis, Pathans and Baluchis, the "Muslim Identity" of Pakistan was getting demystified. And hence there was a continual offort by the rulers to reaffirm Islam as a great unifying bond. "Islam," says Andre Wink, "served a policy of national integration versus ethnic and regional separation." Second, as Andre Wink says, Zia's Islamisation zeal was also "foreign policy oriented". The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was the single most important event to dominate Pakistan's foreign policy throughout the period of Zia's rule. This explains why Zia encouraged the religious education of the *traditional madrasas*. He realised their political potential. In the NWFP, for instance, the *madrasas* became involved in the *jihad* against the Soviets and the Soviet-backed regime in Kabul.

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INTERESTINGLY, the Islamisation process of Bangladesh was not very smooth. It is true that after the 1975 coup all governments in Bangladesh sought to intensify the role of Islam. But it should not be forgotten that 15 per cent of the Bangladesh citizens are non-Muslims. This naturally stands in the way of Islamisation. Moreover, the relations of Bangladesh with the Middle East countries are more limited than those of Pakistan.

Even India, as this book tends to suggest, cannot remain indifferent to the process of Islamisation. How to cope with Islam? How to win the hearts of the Muslims? Or how to project the Muslims as the *significant other* for the Hindus? No political party, it seems, can escape these disturbing questions. It is in this context that Violette Graff's essay acquires its relevance. Although Muslims have never been a majority in Aligarh (34.5 per cent in 1981), the town has undoubtedly a "Muslim image". That's why, as far as Aligarh is concerned, the electoral process evolves its own rationale: a complex rationale characterising many tensions in secularism. Violette Graff has done a remarkable job by narrating the dynamics of the electoral process in Aligarh.

In his essay Theodore P. Wright Jr. tries to examine how, for instance, militant Hindus responded to the "oil-financed revival of Islamic fundamentalism". This vicious circle—majority communalism and minority communalism encouraging each other—has done severe damage to modern Indian politics. But, instead of just condemning "Hindu fascism", Theodore P. Wright Jr. wants to understand—and understand sympathetically—"the buffeted, well-nigh paranoid Hindu majority of India". Unless India restores "the confidence of the majority community in the fairness of the system", argues the author, there seems no easy escape from the crisis.

While reflecting on the politics of religion, a question that begins to haunt one is whether Islam or, for that matter, any religion has got only a repressive dimension. Perhaps at a time when the uglification of religion has become a common practice, it is necessary to recall its emancipatory dimensions. Andre Wink has done a good job by introducing two essays in this edited book—the essays that narrate the emancipatory potential of Islam. Hugh van Skyhawk's essay makes one aware of two contemporary Deccani sufis—Husain Baba Kadri and Rajhaksah Ismail Biyabani—who, in their writings and messages, kept talking about peace and universal brotherhood implicit in Islam.

Likewise, Fateh Mohammad Malik's essay reminds one of Mohammd Iqbal (1877-1938) who could so clearly see the "egalitarian spirit of Islam". Quranic teaching, according to Iqbal, is opposed to holding land as private property. In one of his most fascinating poems in *Bal-i-Jibril,* Iqbal wrote:

> Landlord! this earth is not thine, is not thine,
> Nor yet thy father's, no not thine, nor mine.

As Iqbal always regarded democracy as the most significant ideal in Islam, he sought to rescue it from the "medieval fancies of theologians and logists". This explains why Iqbal was always against Arabian imperialism. Indeed, at a time when in the name of Islam authoritarian regimes justify their oppression, it is necessary to draw inspiration from Iqbal's prophetic urge, to retain the "original purity of Islam".

To conclude, Andre Wink stimulates his readers to expect more and more from him. Let's hope that a great mind like Andre Wink would continue to give us more and more books on Islam so that we can draw the necessary lessons, examine the complex character of modern history, separate the emancipatory potential of Islam from its military abuse, fight the stereotypes and create a better society. ■

Congress and Communalism

P.C. SINGH

One major consequence of the tragedy enacted at Ayodhya on December 6 last year has been the division in the perception of the opinion-maker intellectuals on the issue of 'Congress and communalism'. The eminent political scientist, Prof Rajni Kothari, has argued that "...the genesis of the growth of 'communalism' in India's body politic..." lies in "a virus originated by the Congress party". He also emphasises that the communal card is an instrument to subjugate not only the Muslim minority but also the OBCs and other lower castes from among the Hindus.[1] On the contrary the noted historian, Prof Bipan Chandra feels that to believe that the BJP caught the virus from the Congress is a 'crazy notion'. He also maintains that the Congress is still the main secular political force in the country. Furthermore, according to him, clubbing the Muslims on the communal ground, and the OBCs, the SC-STs in terms of caste and not ideology is 'upside-down communalism' which may strengthen the BJP charge of 'pseudo-secularism'.[2]

What is common with these two divergent views is that in the treatment of the problem, they overemphasise one aspect, and overlook, deliberately or otherwise, the other. In the ultimate analysis, therefore, they appear more *polemical* than rational. Let us begin with the question of the Congress character. There can be no denying the fact that on theoretical ground the Congress remains the main secular political force in the country. It is true that unlike the BJP and the Muslim League, the Congress as a political organisation never arouses religious sentiments openly. That apart, the Congress party is the only party which has an all-India character. The non-Congress political configurations—for example, the NF-LF—which have displayed their secular credentials may not provide a real challenge to the BJP except in the few States such as West Bengal, Bihar and, if united, in UP.

But does the theoretical standing of being a secular political force help it to defend its character? It is not even an open secret now that since the emergence of Mrs Gandhi as an undisputed and autocratic leader the Congress party has adopted the 'communal agenda'. Mrs Gandhi herself promoted Bhindranwale for her own political convenience. In Punjab politics, to counter the growing Akali influence the then duo of Buta Singh and Zail Singh was preferred to a person like Darbara Singh. How it all culminated into 'Operation Bluestar' and ultimately in the assassination of Mrs Gandhi herself does not require repetition.

During the time of Rajiv Gandhi, the Congress party got exposed thoroughly for its "Muslim appeasement policy" in the much debated Shah Bano case. The Rajiv Government succumbed to the Muslim fundamentalist demand to overrule the Supreme Court verdict and enforce *Shariat* rulings on divorce maintenance through legislation. Although Article 44 of the Indian Constitution mandates the establishment of a common civil code. However, when the Congress leadership realised that the backwards, the SCs and the Muslims are about to leave the Congress boat it turned towards the majority community. And in 1985 the Pandora's box of what came to be known as 'Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid' was opened. Although every political party in the country adopted political resolutions, demanding declaration of the controversial structure at Ayodhya as a historical monument, the Congress kept silent over this issue. Among those who took keen interest in opening the lock of the controversial structure were Arun Nehru, Veer Bahadur Singh, Mahanth Avaidhnath and Dau Dayal Khanna. What is surprising is that a well-known figure in the *Sangh Parivar*, Avaidhnath used to be a pro-Congressman once upon a time, and Khanna has been a former Congress Minister.

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UNDER the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi, the party chose other occasions also to exploit religious sentiments. Honouring of the visiting Pope in

India with the status of 'head of state' was interpreted as a symbolic gesture to woo the Christian minority in the country. Similarly, the party manifesto released to address the voters in Mizoram clearly stated that if they want to uphold the Christian values, they should vote for the Congress.

What is the distance that the Congress as a secular party has travelled since Nehru? This is a pertinent question as it throws light on the deteriorating political culture of the country as well. Jawaharlal Nehru preferred an electoral defeat rather than practice communal politics. Unlike Sardar Patel and even Dr Rajendra Prasad, he disapproved the idea of reconstructing the Somnath temple which had been damaged by the Muslim invasion.[3] Because of his secular and scientific temperament Nehru was convinced that construction of the historical Hindu monument may create a sense of apprehension in the Muslims' mind. Narasimha Rao, on the contrary, could not protect the mosque at Ayodhya and thus failed to safeguard the secular tradition of the country for which Nehru always stood for. There should be no confusion over the fact that the present Congress leadership appears interested more in the majority votes than upholding Nehru's legacy of secular India.

The BJP may have caught the virus from the Congress, what is equally true is that the other political parties and mainly the V.P. Singh-led JD, provided the immediate and the most crucial impetus to the spread of the disease. It can be argued that as the contradiction within feudalism gave birth to capitalism, JD's *'Mandal mantra'* paved the way for the *'Mandir card'*. The real intention behind the BJP's Ayodhya issue may not be subjugation of the Muslims as well as the backward Hindus but it was certainly aimed at creating a religious division and thus countering the political implications of the caste divide brought about the 'Mandal issue'. The fragmentation based on caste was sought to be dealt with the religious divide.

Even otherwise, the National Front-Left Front leadership failed to provide an alternative to the Congress' political culture. In his political calculation, V.P. Singh always preferred conservatives like Mufti Mohammad Sayeed and even Meem Afzal, to a secular Arif Mohammad Khan. What is unfortunate is that the Opposition in Indian politics has proved to be an 'irresponsible one'. Instead of providing an alternative to the Congress ideology and/or policy, it has indulged either in 'self-defeat' (in 1979) or the 'politics of divide' (in 1989) which manifested in the form of 'Mandal' and 'Mandir' controversies. The BJP is certainly the immediately identified culprit of what happened at Ayodhya. The ruling party at the Centre will also have to share the 'sin' as it behaved like a silent spectator on December 6 and thereafter. However, the JD may also not escape the charge of being guilty as it helped in preparing the background of the process which finally led to the demolition of the mosque.

This speaks of the decay in our 'national political culture' as a whole and the responsibility for this rests with every organisation in the country. The objective of the political party is no more to protect the national interest but to capture the throne of power. At a critical juncture of Indian history approaching partition when the whole country was communally surcharged, the half-naked *fakir* called Gandhi was walking barefoot on the streets of Noakhali. He was also trying to bring confidence in the Muslims of Bihar by his presence and preventing riots through persuasion and threats of a fast in Calcutta. At Noakhali "as Gandhi's party began to move...the villagers heard him singing one of Rabindranath Tagore's great poems set to music—'If they answer not your call...walk alone, walk alone' ". And in the aftermath of the disaster at Ayodhya, there was no one who would feel inspired by the idea of the Mahatma and by following him could enlighten the whole nation. Poor V.P. Singh who dared to imitate him at Bombay proved to be a big fiasco. After all, there is a difference between 'conviction' and 'calculation'. ■

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Defence Reform under Yeltsin

RAKESH GUPTA

After the dissolution of the USSR in December 1991, the Russian leadership faced the task of transforming the Red Army alongwith establishing the new framework of civil-military relations under the changed circumstances of the CIS and the festering divisivity in different regions of the erstwhile Soviet Union. The Russian military leadership has to perform at least three tasks, namely, transform the Red Army; establish a new framework of relations between the civil society, political authority and the military; and the creation of a military union as a significant underpinning to the economic and political common space called the Commonwealth of Independent States. By any reckoning these were no mean jobs under normal circumstances, let alone in the crisis situation that the Yeltsin phase was a product and feature of. The creation of the CIS itself is regarded as an alarmist response to the process of disintegration that had set in. The significance of the disintegration process must be kept in mind from the angle of geo-strategy at the global level.

Traditionally, the Eurasian landmass occupied by the CIS and the Russian Federation is regarded as an impregnable area that no nukes can advantageously win. For containing it, sea power and the doctrine of sea rim had been developed. That strategy was still in place when the Russian military leadership inherited what has been described by the Russian Defence Minister, Grachev, as 'ruin and debris'. At best the Red Army has been described as a *patchwork quilt* at the time of the end of the Soviet Union. This quilt was torn asunder into national formations and so the new leadership has to put the ruins and the debris together in some viable and credible form if Yeltsin is serious about maintaining the great power posture of the Russian Federation, that is, to influence events at least in the CIS and other parts of Asia and Europe.

The challenge to the military came from another direction: the need for modernisation of the army in the wake of the scientific and technological revolution that had been noted by the military leadership for more than a decade since the formation of the Russian Federation and the CIS. The Gorbachev strategy in the military field, the Ogarkov writings on the need of development of new non-nuclear weapon systems, the need to change the military doctrines, the need to incorporate changes in the structures of the army had been felt and had to be carried out. The development of advanced conventional munitions and the commensurate necessity of having highly mobile forces that could autonomously operate in localised situations required sustained analysis that needed continuity and stability and not disintegration. The Deputy Minister on Military Technical Policy emphasised on quality and not quantitative parameters as also on removing the lag on robotics.

The period after the formation of the CIS led to new problems that could not have arisen in the earlier phase. This related to the new security threats and the acrimonious public exchange and realpolitik between Ukraine and the Russian Federation over the control of strategic forces. The agreements that have been signed between Yeltsin and Leonid Kravchuk have not yielded the desired results and it is hoped by the Russian military brass that the intervention of the Western powers may soften the intransigence of the Ukranian leadership. The Russian Minister of Internal Security and Commander-in-Chief of the CIS, Shaposhnikov, put their finger on the new problems that have emerged on the borders of the CIS. They allege that intelligence services of some countries are recruiting persons from East European regions and the CIS countries to create conditions of soft borders so that smuggling of narcotic, arms and ammunition can go on. This, he felt, would lead to new strategic groupings that are bound to create new grounds of North-South divide and confrontation. He voiced his concern about the attempts to have a mono-polar world led by the US.

The issue of soft borders is highlighted by the conflictual relationships in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Chechen, Kulyabe region, Dnester region and other parts of the Russian Federation. The areas that are involved in the conflictual situations are Caucasia, Central Asia and Russia. Each of these require the intervention of the army that would deter the further disintegration of the regions and create conditions to achieve stability with integrity. Given the historic circumstances, it is the Russian Army that will be called to restore peace. In such a situation some leaders of the NATO alliance have voiced the desire to send NATO troops to the region. Naturally no military leadership in the region would like this to happen. Shaposhnikov said that this was *wittingly or unwittingly an attempt* to accelerate the processes of disintegration that the leaders could not themselves have anticipated.

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THE new tasks of localised action and its duration flashpoints and the rationale of new munitions alongwith the increasing role of the C^3 assets required changes in the identification of the enemy within and without so that operational forces could be developed. But the basic question was the political one and that was: what will be the relationship between the political authority and the army? The Russian Defence Minister has suggested a change from the earlier interpretation of what is meant by professionalisation. The Russian President has passed a decree in May 1992 that has announced the establishment of the Russian Army. The Defence Minister noted the following as the basis for creating the civil-military relations:

a) It will be a professional army with a mixed recruiting principle for the interim till a fully voluntary army was created. This enunciation of the principle marks the trend of continuity if compared with the principles announced by the leadership in the Gorbachev phase.

b) By professionalisation is meant that the army be kept out of political battles or games. He told the Russian Congress of Peoples Deputies:

> There is nothing more terrible as far as officers are concerned than finding themselves caught between antagonistic parties and groups.

But at the height of power struggle the various groupings are now really trying to split the army, cause trouble in military collectives, and draw army officers into political struggles. This is the principle that came to be accepted in the period of *perestroika* with the difference that there was still present the Communist Party cells that are no longer there. Earlier the Opposition was demanding that they be represented in the army. Now it appears that the political divide witnessed in the Congress also has its elements in the army.

More fundamentally, it must be said that the military leadership before the change-over had come to protest over excessive use of force in the flashpoints and also expressed the opinion that the army will swear by the Constitution and that it did not matter which party was in power Further, the change that has come about in the interpretation of the concept of professionalisation is that during the earlier phase the political questions were decided by the Party and the models that explained the Party-army relationship were conflictual, cooperative and conflictual-cooperative ones. After the unconstitutional coup in which the army played a democratic role, as asserted both by Yeltsin and Gorbachev, the army has set on the course of professionalisation where it is closer to the Western interpretation of that concept: subordination to the values of the Constitution. Therefore, Grachev said:

> The army has been willing to be on the side of the people; on the side of the law; on the side of the Constitution.

This is more an announcement of an intention rather than that of a fact since the Russian Federation is still debating a Constitution. Its role in the coup showed that the army was with the people. After the Yeltsin decree it is clear that the army has the law behind it.

c) Yeltsin appealed to the political forces to keep the army officers out of the factional politics in the army itself. He asked the political leaders not to play what he called the army-card. He said that the army need not be split on the issues of politics and a united army will be an asset for the democratic reform in Russia. In the previous period the army had intervened on several occasions in factional battles. Inside the army there was the system of the Political Commis that was introduced by Trotsky and Lenin provide for political control in the professional officer corps. Once that institution has been abolished it is necessary that the values of the Constitution be imbibed in the army. This is in line with the practice of the armies all over the world.

Yeltsin's Russia is, therefore, engaged in the process of transforming the armed forces on the new interpretation of the concept of professionalisation that has had acceptance in the other parts of the world which have armies not characterised as revolutionary armies but are called professional armies. A major distinction between the two is that at the social level the former are composed of the workers and peasants while the latter are composed of elites—traditional and modern. ■

In Memory of Marx and Lenin

Marxist Theory of Socialism Re-examined

ANIL RAJIMWALE

Existing socialism", the only appplied form of Marxist theory of socialism, has collapsed. The remaining "socialist" or Communist rty regimes, for example, in China, Vietnam, c. are changing so drastically that they already not match with the official and traditional rsions of Marxism.

The events invite us to at least two crucial oblems for deep thinking.

One. The Marxist dictum that "practice is the terion of truth" has been propagated a lot. If follow it, the practice of socialist history and results negate most of the tenets of Marxism d Leninism. After the collapse of socialism, at remains is only the *theory* of socialism. Is s theory correct and applicable anymore?

In the light of history and its results one must t hesitate to have a fresh look at Marxism and ninism itself, and be bold enough to reject se parts which are inapplicable.

Marx and Engels based their theory of socialism the assumption that the means of production l keep growing larger and concentrated and, refore, a point must reach where the conflict ween large scale collective labour and rapidly structing individual and private ownership omes insoluble. This would lead to the torship of the proletariat. (*Socialism, Utopian l Scientific, Manifesto, Capital, Paris nmune,* etc.)

History has undeniably proved the theory of 'dictatorship of the proletariat' wrong. And it ommon knowledge that the Communist Parties ncreasing numbers, including in India, have n it up.

n order to trace logical lines, let us ask: What ctly is a workers' rule? Is it possible, and if ', then in what form? Engels, pointing to the is Commune, said, this is the dictatorship of proletariat! If it was really so, then it has not duplicated anywhere else in the world eafter. Because in every single case of popular lt/revolution, it has degenerated into splitting f a section of leadership to form a regular aucracy *ruling over those very people who rose and depriving them of all possible power they had had on the day of revolt.*

There has not been a single exception to this rule. Therefore, the question remains to be answered as to *what exactly is a workers' state.*

Marx and Engels visualised the emergence of socialism in the advanced capitalist countries basing themselves on the above mentioned tendency of the means of production to become large-scale machinery. They did not expect such widespread revolutions (characterised by Lenin as 'socialist') in the backward countries.

But no socialist revolution has taken place in any advanced capitalist country either. Why? (1) either there is a flaw in the theory and expectation; (2) or there was a drastic change in the situation as analysed by Lenin in his theories of imperialism, of the weakest link, and of the two stages of revolution; (3) or there was taking place a basic change in the nature of capitalism itself imparting it a prolonged nature of change into something else, thus rendering the democratic and socialist revolutions superfluous as alternative to capitalism, with capitalism itself evolving into communism without state aid. This needs to be looked into in the context of the ongoing technological revolution.

A comparative analysis would prove that the trend in the evolution of means of production and machinery has been reversed after Marx. Today it is not toward the creation of large-scale but small and smaller scales of means of production and communication. Therefore, the very basis on which the edifice of Marx's *theory of socialism* was raised is dissolving and dissociating. Let it be noted that we are talking here of his theory of *socialism* and not that of *communism* which is an entirely different matter.

Two. Lenin visualised socialism in the backward regions of the world consequent upon the general crisis of imperialism which was seen as having become a hindrance to the growth of productive forces. His predictions about imperialism and about socialism in Russia and elsewhere have been largely proved incorrect, even positively wrong on several basic counts.

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LENIN overstated the case for socialism in Russia. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Kautsky proved to be correct in their criticism of the Soviet power and its artificial and forceful separation from other centres of power. They, alongwith some others, and also the Mensheviks, were correct in opposing the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly (CA), a powerful representative of large chunks of opinion in Russia. Subsequent events prove this point. Therefore, the Mensheviks were not always wrong nor were the Bolsheviks always correct. The division between the power of the Soviet and that of the CA, and the destruction of the latter, was to prove fatal for the Soviet power and the Soviet society.

Having described the Soviet power as socialist, Lenin went on to build an 'alternative' socialist society, which in the given situation was not too far from being a utopia. It was almost entirely artificial, and its most grotesque product was *Stalinism*. What the nations of the Union of Soviets needed was a long-term normal gradual raising of productive levels, largely through petty-bourgeois and capitalist growth. A simple democratic revolution was presented as socialist revolution. The Soviet experiment was like flying in the face of history. In fact *socialism* was not on the agenda at all, although some kind of people's power was. Nations needed independence, not centralised union. But the very imposition of the concept of socialism without grounds changed the meaning of everything.

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Luxemburg, Kautsky, Gramsci and early Marx were more in tune with history, as also the Mensheviks in some respects.

Lenin proved wrong on another count. The development and growth of productive forces under capitalism and imperialism never ceased. In fact their rigour increased with the passing of time culminating in the new technological revolution. A considerable part of the Leninist edifice was raised on the assumption that imperialism was collapsing.

The question inevitably rises as to what extent the practice of existing socialism really was an application of Marxism.

In the meantime we are going through the scientific-technological and information revolution changing everything in its wake. Interestingly, Marxist-Leninist *method* (science of dialectics) as distinct from its theories and ideology helps us to confirm the *materialist conception of history* and use it in uncovering the nature of the micro-electronics revolution and its socio-economic impact.

Marx, Engels and Lenin were *scientists* to the core, never afraid of facing new facts and revising and rethinking concepts. They may have been proved wrong or not entirely correct as ideologists or revolutionists; but that in no way reduces their importance as scientists. Today we have to compare and contrast their *scientific* and *ideological* beings and develop Marxism as a science.

It was on hard factual and dialectical facts and motions that Marx drew his conclusions and evolved theories. The changes in these very facts and motions and their usage necessitate basic changes in Marxist theory itself.

Marxism needs reassertion as a science freed from ideological predeterminations. A simple reassertion of the past is fatal; full assimilation of the new and future will lead to new life for theory identified with the march of history. ■

Cold War Superpowers in Quandary over Peace Dividend Projects

BATUK VORA

It's a season of political transition for both the superpowers—the United States and Russia. The dimensions of Russia's post-Cold War suffering and political crisis are immeasurably greater than that of the US, despite the fact that large urban areas of the US are reduced to the level of economic catastrophe of some Third World countries. But so far as the defence conversion programmes (turning the arms manufacturing facilities into consumer product centres) are concerned, both powers stand more or less on an equal footing.

It is being realised now in some quarters here that the former President Bush and his advisers exaggerated the military needs assuming some incredible "threats" to American "national interests". This line of thinking among policy-makers is still found to be lingering.

This is evident in the Clinton Administration's "dollar-for-dollar" reinvestment of defence savings into the civilian economy averaging only over $ 12 billion annually for five years. A suggestion made by the National Commission on Economic Conversion and Disarmament to cut the defence spending by 50 per cent by 1997 has been ignored. This could have made possible the cumulative peace dividend up to $ 669 billion by the year 2001!

The US allies—Britain, France, Germany and Japan—sustain the next biggest military budgets in the world. The US will reduce military spending by only $ 6.7 billion from the Bush budget, a two per cent cut! In 1998 they will spend $ 252 billion on the military. The budget rules last year prohibited spending of defence savings on domestic programmes. No conversion programme was in place. As the *Washington Post* put it: the minimal cuts were a "calculated decision" to "put off for another year the tough choices about which weapons programmes will survive the Cold War".

On the other hand, the heavy emphasis on dual-use technology in Washington of the 1993 'conversion' programme reflects a plan for consolidating the defence industrial base in an era of reduced defence budgets. It has been a practice with Washington to withdraw aid or technology transfer to a Third World country if that country indulges in dual-use technology—producing an item that could be used both for military and civil purposes. But the same dual-use theory has been made a necessity here for the huge second-tier defence producing corporations. First tier companies like Lockheed, Martin Marietta of General Electronic's defence division and others are still producing weapons of mass destruction and inventing new weapons.

The commission criticises the Administration's 'Trojan horse' policy. "It seems that a critical lesson has been lost from the Second World War experience, namely, that it was the US world class commercial industrial base that permitted the rapid build-up of a technologically superior war fighting capability. Now the call for high level military R&D to preserve the superiority is misplaced," said a recent report on conversion.

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SIMILARLY, 312 enterprises in Russia surveyed by the Russain Government and a private research firm in 1992 found that the average share of military productions in these enterprises was 40 per cent. Nearly all the managers talked of some plan to change the situation: 37 per cent talked about conversion; 34 per cent talked about privatisation; 13 per cent were focusing on foreign investment and 12 per cent wanted to divide their enterprises into several smaller entities.

Since 25 per cent wanted increased government orders, the government is going for more arms sale around, including their new agreements with China and India. Sixteen per cent wants the old centralised planning system. Only four per cent said they could prosper without government lp. Nineteen per cent wanted the right of free marketing and trade. Only five per cent saw any hope in the new economic reforms!

In fact, a serious tug-of-war is going on in the former Soviet Union over the question of conversion. An American official attended last year's Moscow conference on conversion of Russian aerospace industry. The official, Seymour Melman, Chariman of the American Economic Development Department, said that the "top leadership of the Russian military industry has been and remains opposed to conversion to civilian economy. A suggestion to turn their arms factories into reliable centres for food production was totally ignored."

APPEAL TO CITIZENS

The outrage at Ayodhya and subsequent events have rudely shaken the foundations of communal amity and threatened the very existence of the modern Indian State.

The paramount need today is to promote awareness of this crisis and secure the commitment of citizens to the ideals of secularism and democracy. Please sign the pledge and retain a copy of the pledge and display it prominently in your home/workplace. The campaign's objective is to collect 2 crore individual pledges over a certain period of time.

You can make photocopies of this pledge and become a volunteer by collecting more signatures for the campaign. At the end of this campaign a public rally should be organised in every town/city where the pledges have been taken.

Pledge

- **I have a dream of a peaceful, united, humane, egalitarian and prosperous India.**
- **I believe that this dream cannot be realised without rooting out communalism from our land.**
- **I pledge myself to preserve and strengthen, India's unity and communal harmony.**
- **I solemnly commit myself to the vow which Gandhiji asked of all Indians:**

"With God as witness, we Hindus and Mohamedans declare that we shall behave towards one another as children of the same parents, that we shall have no differences, that the sorrows of each shall be the sorrows of the other and that each shall help the other in removing them. We shall respect each other's religion and religious feelings and shall not stand in the way of our respective religious practices. We shall always refrain from violence to each other in the name of religion."

Signature ______________ Name ________________

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Sharp budget cuts ordered by the Russian Government after the August 1991 coup attempt were considered a dreadful blow to the managers of the aerospace industry. The Russian Government's calculation that a policy of free market buying and selling would trigger a burst of a new kind of production proved wrong. An attempt in 1990 by the Central planning apparatus (*Gosplan*) to assign new civilian projects to various military enterprises failed because there was no logic in the capacity of the plants and certain civilian products ordered to be produced.

An example of such failure cited here is in Ilyushin, a giant Russian aerospace company. In August 1990, the Ilyushin was assigned to manufacture spaghetti packing machines, potato peeling machines and equipment for drying glued leather for shoes as well as processing for fur industry. But this never happened. The Soviet factories were in total disarray by that time when the idea of conversion remained only a dream!

But Ilyushin has been able at least to work on a passenger jet plane, with fuselage and construction done by Ilyushin, engines supplied by Pratt and Whitney, avionic instruments supplied by the Rockwell Corporation and interior design contracted to a French firm. Similarly, there are efforts in such large arms producing companies as the Saratov Electronic Plant, Vympel Corporation and the Saratov Aviation Plant to implement conversion plans. Their success will depend on the attraction of a broad array of international investors. The main problem for them is how to convert first their centralised military planning into independent corporate management and ownership systems.

Conversion is thus a big challenge to both the superpowers in their own way. It is a long, painful process. The main hurdle in both the countries is a section of powerful military leaders and for the US in particular, the existence of a ghost of "threats" and perceived "dangers" around. ■

Demand for Jharkhand State is Justified

JAHANGIR KHAN

The demand of Statehood for the Jharkhand area has caused a furore in many circles. Some of the intellectuals have been stridently critical of the Jharkhand agitation for a separate State. Some have even gone so far as to term the demand as unconstitutional. It is amazing that it has been equated with the Kashmir and Punjab calls for secession. The demand of a Jharkhand State is within the framework of the Constitution, so it is unfair to equate it with other secessionist demands. In my view, the demand for a separate State indicates that the people of the area have become aware of their rights and have come to the conclusion that only self-governance can ensure those rights.

Jharkhand has rich mineral belts and its forest resources are also equally impressive. These resources generate crores of rupees to the Bihar State and Central Governments and create employment opportunities for thousands of people.

However, the tribals who belong to this area have gained very little from it. The lion's share of the returns from the vast mineral resources have been cornered by the government agencies/ contractors. Industries came up rapidly in Jharkhand accompanied by urban growth because of the steady increase in immigration. The composition of Jharkhand's population began to change. Twenty years ago, approximately 10 per cent of Jharkhand's population were immigrants. In spite of their low percentage, they tended to occupy more than 50 per cent of industrial jobs, were better paid as skilled workers, and were hired mostly on a permanent basis.

The immigrants tended to get the benefits of development in the area while the tribals, together with other Jharkhandis, largely remained unskilled workers and peasants.

The fact that development has not been translated into concrete benefits for the Jharkhandis, but rather into pauperisation and extraction of resources, has been understood by the people of this area. This was reflected in their outright rejection of several developmental schemes proposed for that area.

While chalking out State boundaries, major ethnic groups of the Jharkhand area have been divided among different States and thus their strength in the political arena has been effectively weakened. By an administrative artifice, these groups appear as minorities in "non-tribal" States, a situation further aggravated by the steady inflow of migrants into these areas.

The question of granting Statehood to any area does not violate the Constitution. At the all party conference of 1928, Motilal Nehru prescribed the principles governing the redistribution of provinces in these words:

> Partly geographical and partly economic and financial, but the main consideration must necessarily be the wishes of the people and the linguistic unity of the area concerned.

In December 1952, the first State was formed on the basis of a common language following an agitation spearheaded by the Telegu-speaking people. After Andhra Pradesh, some more States were also formed on linguistic lines.

In 1962, Nagaland was granted Statehood solely in accordance with the wishes of the people. Feasibility was thrown to the winds. Other North-Eastern areas were granted Statehood in the early seventies and late eighties, again only because the people of the area demanded it. These States depend totally, or to a great extent, on the Central Government for funds. But it was the will of the people that counted. The formation of these States proves that in a democratic country, the will of the people cannot be ignored.

Jharkhand has a much stronger case for Statehood than the North-East ever had. As a State, it will be totally self-dependent for funds and its contribution to the Central kitty is not likely to diminish in any way. Self-governance will give the tribals all the opportunities for development that have till now been withheld from them.

The Centre should seriously consider granting Statehood to Jharkhand and other such areas where the local people have been exploited and prevented from progressing. Not only are smaller States easy to administer, but also self-governance will benefit the original inhabitants in a way no other rule can. If the USA with a population of 26 crores has 50 States, then it is not unreasonable that India, with its population of 85 crores, should have many more than at present. ■

NIKHIL: Policy Level Bankruptcy

(Continued from page 2)

not merely by the Human Rights lobbies—that the two items which have been responsible for antagonising the people in the Valley are the combing operations and the custodial deaths. On both these counts, it is important for the authorities to decide how to put an end to them so that the present embittered environment in the Valley could be changed and certain amount of trust and confidence of the people towards the government is restored. What is involved here is the battle for the mind of the people in the Valley—to enable them to judge for themselves the advantages of remaining within the Indian Union in contrast to the negative consequence of going out of it.

The crux of the present crisis in Kashmir is to be found in the handling of this problem. This is not just a psychological issue but a very real political problem with a historical background. This has to be squarely faced. And it cannot be squarely faced unless and until the government is clear in its mind how far it is prepared to go to win over the Kashmir psyche, if one may call it. With the BJP clamour for the removal of Article 370, it is but natural for an average Kashmiri to be concerned about the special status of Jammu and Kashmir as specifically ensured by the Indian Constitution. The implied edge of the BJP propaganda is that the people in the Kashmir Valley being overwhelmingly Muslim cannot be trusted, and so they should no longer enjoy the immunity so long granted to them.

What is held back in this propaganda is that the Article 370 provides the State of Jammu and Kashmir to have a Constitution of its own, and that Constitution enjoins the inviolability of the State's accession to the Indian Union, a provision which cannot be amended, as laid down in that very Constitution. Secondly, why so much fuss about Article 370, when one finds no attack by the BJP and Co on Article 371 which grants similar elements of autonomy to the North-Eastern States?

No doubt the government has repeatedly made it clear that it would not permit the scrapping or any modification of Article 370. But one gets the impression that any gesture which may help to win over the people of the Valley—at least to lower their antipathy towards the Centre—is being held back by the government for fear of antagonising the leading Opposition party in Parliament. And those in the ruling establishment who measure every move by the criterion of vote-gathering, would certainly be holding on to the position that if the government stood up for the Kashmiri people, it might have an adverse impact on the Hindu voter. This assumption itself is incorrect, for the simple reason that there is a very large body of Hindu opinion which refuses to thrive on Muslim-baiting in some form or other.

◆

KASHMIR, however, is not the only theatre where the government's bankruptcy at the policy level is shown up. It is facing problems of regional unrest all the way from the Bodoland to Jharkhand via Darjeeling. More such issues are bound to come up and unless the government comes out with a clear policy perspective on this burning question of growing regional assertion, it will not only be unable to tackle them, but reduce these to a mere law-and-order question which will make these worse. In this context one is at a loss to understand why the recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission are not being taken up in right earnest.

The Sarkaria Report is not a revolutionary document at all. Its recommendations are really meant to strengthen the Constitution and not weaken it. This is a report which commands wide support and there is no earthly reason why the government should fight shy of implementing its recommendations. There is no doubt whatsoever that if the Sarkaria Report is taken up with a sense of urgency then the right signal will go to all militant groups—whether in Kashmir or Punjab, in Jharkhand or the North-East—that this government can be trusted to take up their demands and grievances in right earnest. Needless to add, it will also bring down the mounting tension that prevails between the Centre and the States.

The perspective is missing in the government's approach to the communal question also. Leave alone its pathetic record in handling the developments on December 6 and afterwards, one notices a strange tendency to surrender whenever faced with the communal bully and blackmail. The latitude that has been systematically extended to the Shiv Sena is now sought to be made up by the latest move in Kerala to declare a weekly holiday on Friday instead of Sunday to placate Muslim communalism. Rather even-handed one may claim—yielding to both Hindu and Muslim fanaticism. In other words, promote communalism to ensure vote-banks.

Here is a case of petty electoral politics prevailing over national imperatives of fighting communalism. ■

MAZAR ALI KHAN: Indo-Pak Relations

(Continued from page 3)

optimism. The risk of further communalisation of politics is far greater than is admitted. It is also an unpleasant fact that the lower ranks in the law-enforcement services act often under communal influence, and only the armed forces can be depended upon to act with impartiality. It should also be noted that, more than ever before, the BJP leaders are confident that they have succeeded in redefining India's political ideology. Hence, they have begun to demand a mid-term poll in which they hope to capture power at the Centre. Unless their challenge is met effectively, there is a possibility that large parts of India will succumb before the pressure mounted by the *Hindutva* forces.

In varying degrees, the secular parties share the blame for allowing the BJP to become an important factor in Indian politics. In any case they must decide not to punish the Indian people because they feel that the Congress or some of its leaders deserve to be punished for past waywardness or opportunism. All these parties must try to build up a massive secular front and use all their influence to mobilise the people and ensure that their loyalty to the Constitution and the ideals of Indian secularism cannot be suborned. If they fail to do so, they will be jointly responsible for helping the forces behind the RSS, whose well-publicised game is to destroy India's polity and thereafter disrupt the whole region.

All democratic forces should also evolve a consensus on Ayodhya and related disputes. Since a negotiated settlement is now out of the question, the solution suggested by the Supreme Court in response to the reference made by the Union Government should be accepted by all of them and by all Muslim groups. The Court findings should end the dispute becasue it may be taken for granted that its opinion will be based on fact, not on faith, as the RSS urges.

Inevitably, the communal situation in India affects its relations with Pakistan. Both the governments and political leaders should grasp the fact that the subcontinent is caught in a most serious crisis. This realisation has not yet begun to influence general thinking. The first reaction in Pakistan was to punish the minorities in this country. Then, in an exhibition of juvenile self-righteousness, the two governments engaged in a battle of words and reached a new stage in diplomatic aggressiveness. The manoeuvres by Islamabad and New Delhi call for drastic cuts in diplomatic representations. This can serve no useful purpose and only inconvenience citizens of one country who wish to travel to the other. Nor can the continued hostile propaganda help to bring about a salutary change in the atmosphere.

It may be recalled that the wizards of Shehrazade once believed, in defiance of all logic, that the BJP leaders were more dependable and the promises they made in good spoken Urdu of a new era of friendly relations with Pakistan deserved serious attention. The bitter experience of recent months should have brought home the lesson that the RSS and its allies represent the biggest hindrance to normal Indo-Pakistan relations and communal harmony in India.

For Pakistan the best policy is to cooperate with India's secular parties. It is also necessary that Pakistan's democratic parties should evolve an understanding on seeking friendship with all countries and particularly our nearest neighbours, India and Afghanistan. In respect of India, an essential condition for goodneighbourly ties is that our minorities are treated fairly as equal citizens. This should be done anyhow, but for better Indo-Pakistan relations discrimination against non-Muslims in Pakistan weakens Islamabad's position for persuading India to protect its large number of Muslims and accord them equal rights.

It also needs to be remembered that over the decades Pakistan and India have succeeded in settling bilateral problems only when their leaders have sat down across the table and allowed themselves the rare luxury of straightforward negotiations. Whatever advantage either government may see in other tactics, such manoeuvring has never proved to be of any advanatage for either country. The subcontinent's publicists often choose to describe the situation facing these countries by saying that they stand at the crossroads. The cliche is quite apt, but it should be followed up with the truism that almost always when they start moving they go along the wrong road. Pakistan and India are indeed at the crossroads once again, but they can no longer afford to make another wrong choice. If they are to survive and prosper, the only option for them is to establish a rational relationship based on proper understanding of their common problems. They must agree to shed the burden of past fears and suspicions and work out policies that will allow them to deal sensibly with their disputes sensibly with their disputes so that their peoples can look towards the future with greater hope. ■

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A PROFILE IN COMMITMENT

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OUR GOAL : SHELTER FOR ALL

Chaitra-D NHB 1891

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Centenary Homage to P.C. Mahalanobis • Chakmas

Mainstream

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EDITORIAL

Clinton's Terrorism

Under Bill Clinton the United States of America has re-established itself as the global policeman thereby upholding the position Clinton's predecessor, George Bush, adopted against Iraq more than two years ago. But what is more striking, Clinton—who many in the US and outside had expected to strike a departure from the policies of the previous US Administrations aimed at teaching the world, and the Third World in particular, how to behave—has, by the US cruise missile action of blasting a section of the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, helped his country to graduate to the level of the foremost terrorist state on earth.

Clinton himself has declared that the real purpose of the missile assault on the headquarters of the Iraqi Intelligence Service in Baghdad was to teach a lesson not only to Iraq but other states practising terrorism. But the US he claims to lead has itself emerged as the terrorist military giant in the process. For, the attack was launched only on grounds of a mere suspicion that the Iraqi authorities had planned to kill George Bush during his visit to Kuwait last April. Howsoever much Washington may claim that it has "irrefutable" intelligence information of such a conspiracy, its failure to furnish the information to the UN Security Council before initiating the air strikes on Baghdad is in itself a clear proof that it acted on grounds of suspicion. Obviously such a step is nothing but a terrorist act impermissible under international law. There is not an iota of doubt that it is an arbitrary action equal in magnitude to the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait in 1990 and must be treated as such.

It is a travesty of truth that all the nations of the world fell in line and endorsed the US action. Silent endorsement did come from Russia, the US' erstwhile adversary now transformed into Washington's ally under the Yeltsin dispensation. However, vocal approval came only from Britain with China recording its unequivocal condemnation in the true spirit of independence Beijing has been displaying for quite some time. But what is of exceptional importance is that even the Vatican which opposed the Bush fire in the Gulf in 1991 has deplored the wanton Clinton attack on Iraq highlighting the loss of innocent civilian lives.

In this backdrop the Narasimha Rao Government's cowardly statement deserves to be denounced in no uncertain terms.

The text of the statement reads thus:

> The Government of India is against state-sponsored terrorism. We are ourselves victims of state-sponsored terrorism from across the border in the west. We support action against state-sponsored terrorism.
>
> On the other hand, we are concerned about the violation of national sovereignty. Such phenomena can affect peace and stability in the West Asian region where assiduous efforts are on to further the peace process.
>
> We have sympathy for the people of Iraq and regret the civilian population suffered. We hope all disputes will be settled peacefully without resort to force.

According to this statement, the Government of India is not averse to "action", rather it *supports* such "action", against "state-sponsored terrorism" which is the euphemism for the so-called Iraqi conspiracy to assassinate Bush but not for Clinton's terrorism. The latter has only evoked "concern" in South Block over the "violation of national sovereignty"! Never before was there such an abject surrender to US blandishments.

It is unworthy of a leader of the non-aligned movement not to raise its voice of protest against such a blatantly terrorist action resorted to by the world's sole superpower. The statement provides a measure of our political dependence on Washington now that Manmohanomics has played havoc with the strategy of self-reliance the Nehru-Mahalanobis model of economic development had promoted since the fifties.

June 29 S.C.

COMMENTARY

Bankruptcy Writ Large

SUMIT CHAKRAVARTTY

The Congress Working Committee meeting at Bhopal on June 25 has no doubt endorsed the course of action proposed by the Union Minister for Human Resource Development, Arjun Singh, against the BJP for quite some time now and to that extent it does signify the return of Arjun Singh to the centre-stage of the Congress leadership after having been marginalised and compelled to striking dissenting notes for several months. But as far as the image and stature of the Congress as the country's largest national party are concerned, there have been no efforts at Bhopal to refurbish and restore them following the startling allegations of the stock market scamster, Harshad Mehta. In that sense the Bhopal meet would in due course prove to be counter-productive.

It has been brought into focus on the pages of this journal that by making the BJP the target of attack soon after Harshad Mehta's statement relating to the Rs 1 crore pay-off, the Congress has, by its shortsightedness, permitted the BJP, the principal Opposition party in Parliament today, to emerge as a crusader against corruption. The CWC meet at Bhopal has lent additional impetus to this process. First, the "ideological" struggle against the BJP was sought to be elevated to a higher plane at Bhopal. And secondly, there was not a word in the relevant resolution of combatting corruption that is eating into the vitals to our society. The Congress has thus exposed itself fully and that too at a time when the question of corruption in public life has assumed grave proportions with the Big Bull's open accusation that the Prime Minister of India accepted a Rs 1 crore bribe from him, a development without precedence in independent India.

It bears repetition that the ruling party and its leadership's reaction to such a serious accusation alongside other relevant charges has instead of allaying suspicions only helped to strengthen them. Even the cursory denial of the accusation did not carry any firm refutation of the Prime Minister having met Harshad Mehta. The situation was made more complicated by Narasimha Rao's statement to a Western publication that he did not recollect any meeting with the Big Bull thereby conveying his uncertainty on that score. Subsequent "documentary" evidences to deny the reported meeting on November 4, 1991 were unconvincing as the 45 minute gap in the official meetings scheduled on that day was too glaring to be brushed aside as inconsequential.

Be that as it may, what has hurt the Prime Minister most is his persisting reluctance to seek judicial redressal by filing a defamation suit against Harshad Mehta in order to clear his name. The public perception throughout the country has been one of dismay with the overpowering feeling that, after all, Narasimha Rao's action betrays that he has something to conceal. The Prime Minister's public postures in trying to laugh out the accusation cannot erase this feeling from the public mind. The fact of the matter is that he has come under cloud. And in this setting the entire Opposition's vociferous demand—that Narasimha Rao should step down in the interest of probity and honesty in public life as well as the norms of democracy he himself has pledged to uphold—acquires increasing relevance. This cannot be obfuscated by seeking to establish Harshad Mehta's links with the BJP. For the Big Bull's intimate connections with the Congress personalities at all levels are too well known to be buried. Cheap slogans like *"Hamare neta Harshad Mehta"* coined by the Congress leadership to denigrate the BJP can only recoil on it in no time.

The Congress has woken up to the necessity of fighting the BJP much too late in the day. Even after the demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya on December 6 last year it did not feel the urgency of such a struggle. Hence its response to that grievous blow to our secular democracy was one of allround confusion. At times wrong signals of a Congress-BJP patch-up were sent out. At others the Congress' knee-jerk reactions (like dismissal of the BJP-run State Governments) helped to strengthen the BJP itself. If the BJP has to be fought the Congress' strategy will have the opposite and disastrous effect. Moreover, even in the face of the mounting problems the Congress is encountering the party has failed to put up a united front: Sharad Pawar's absence from the Bhopal CWC is a significant pointer the far-reaching implications of which cannot be minimised.

The much-trumpeted support for Narasimha Rao at Bhopal does not hold any real meaning for the perceptive observer. The CWC meet has only accentuated the crisis the ruling party is confronted with at present as the realisation is gradually dawning on the average Congressman that the PM has become more of a liability than an asset for the party as a whole. ■

Rameshwar Thakur Case

Privilege Committee's Grave Dereliction of Duty

MADHU LIMAYE

On September 4, 1992, when the stock market scam then being probed by the Joint Parliamentary Committee headed by Ram Niwas Mirdha was very much in the news, George Fernandes submitted a breach of privilege notice against Rameshwar Thakur, Minister of State for Finance, and P.G. Lele, Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Finance.

Fernandes charged them with committing breach of privilege of the Committee and Parliament by seeking to influence/mislead some members of the JPC with a view to obstructing the work of the Committee by arranging to deliver to them a note in *khaki*-coloured envelopes marked "private and confidential". He called it a patently clandestine operation. He requested the Speaker to refer the matter to the Privileges Committee.

On September 11, 1992 the Speaker referred the matter to the Rajya Sabha in terms of the decision of 1954 that privilege matters no matter where raised if they involved members of the other House should be dealt by the House concerned. Rameshwar Thakur is a member of the Rajya Sabha. The Chairman, K.R. Narayanan, asked Thakur to furnish his comments on the Privilege notice. The Rajya Sabha's communication was dated October 12, 1992. Thakur's comments were received on November 6, 1992.

On November 16, 1992 the Chairman referred the matter to the Privileges Committee of the Rajya Sabha without placing the matter before the House. Apparently the Chairman was convinced that a *prima facie* case existed and the matter was "fit for further inquiry" or investigation. Otherwise there was no need for him to send it to the Committee. He could have himself disallowed it by saying that no case of breach of privilege had been made out in the basic document. But he did not adopt this course and passed on the buck to the Committee of Privileges.

The Committee of Privileges (Rajya Sabha) met on December 2, 1992 and decided to provide the "background material" to the members for perusal and study. The Committee met on January 8, 1993 and "after carefully" considering the documents concluded that the matter did not involve any breach of privilege.

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IT needs to be pointed out that Rameshwar Thakur's tone was quite offensive, although the man was under cloud. He maintained that it had not been possible for him to ascertain what the "clear-cut charge of breach of privilege was". He even contended that a privilege "to be breached must first exist", and the Honourable Member (Fernandes) had not indicated what was that privilege. When the Chairman referred the matter to the Committee, the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha/the Committee's Chairman should have framed the specific issue and then asked Thakur and Lele to explain. This they had not done. Nor did they ask Fernandes, through the Speaker, to elaborate his allegation after receiving Thakur's comments. In fact, from the Committee's brief report the following facts emerge: No reasons, no arguments. No refutation of Fernandes' contention. No record of any witnesses examined. Obviously Lele was not examined. Thakur says some members asked for information. We are not told who these members were. Were they Congress members only or there were also some Opposition members? No record of which members of the Committee were in attendance at its first meeting on December 2, 1992; no record of those who attended the January 8, 1993 meeting. No record of attendance at the sitting (March 5, 1993) which adopted the report. There is no mention that Fernandes was sent a copy of Thakur's comments through the proper channel, namely, through the Speaker, and invited to reply to them. The Committee could have examined Fernandes with the concurrence of the Speaker and the Lok Sabha. This was not done. There is

(Continued on page 32)

CENTENARY HOMAGE

This article and the next are meant to mark the birth centenary of Prof Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis on June 29, 1993.
—Editor

Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis

Betrayal of a Visionary

ASHOK MITRA

The irony hits the eye: while the Indian economy could not be in a worse mess, economic intellection in the country is scaling rare heights. In retrospect, the spectacular advance in the quality of economic analysis in post-independence India owes enormously to the endeavours of two journeymen, Professor P.C. Mahalanobis and Sachin Chaudhuri. Neither of them belonged to the narrow orbit of professional economics.

Sachin Chaudhuri had a degree in the subject but for most of his early life he had pottered around as a dilettante of a journalist. No matter, his *Economic Weekly*—now *Economic and Political Weekly*—provided, for the first time, a forum for economists in the country to dare to dare.

Mahalanobis, on the other hand, taught Indian economists what and how to dare. The professor was even more of an outsider to the profession; his credentials were, those of a physicist and statistician. He held in total disdain the timidity the indigenous tribe of economists habitually displayed. Such disdian was richly deserved.

Indian economists, Mahalanobis felt, must extricate themselves from the colonial burden of an excessively mechanistic concern over the allocation of resources at a given point of time. For a wretchedly poor country such as India the relevant agenda for economic analysis had to be the problems of growth over time; in fact, that should be the only agenda.

Mahalanobis went straight to the point. This country had the resources and the talent. It was poised for development, only the imagination in proper quarters which could propel the country toward growth was missing. The professor knew what he was talking about. He had done the essential spadework to improve the country's basic data and was the driving spirit behind both the national income committee and the National Sample Survey.

Mahalanobis was, therefore, confident regarding the nation's potential for rapid, self-sustaining growth; this potential must be realised. His friendship with Jawaharlal Nehru since their Cambridge days together allowed him, in the early fifties, access to the portals of power. The opportunity was availed.

The statisical advisor to the Prime Minister soon made irrelevance of the Planning Commission. Or rather once he was inducted into the Commission, Mahalanobis showed it how to be relevant. Planning was for growth. Planning, at the same time, implied discipline. For a poor, struggling economy, discipline was coterminous with mobilising for austerity.

There was a method, a step by step advance of logic, in the audacity he deployed to explain what he had in mind. First came a simple one sector model, expressing growth in national income as a function of the rate of savings, the efficiency of capital investment (known in the jargon as the capital-output ratio) and the rate of population growth.

Even conventional economists did not find much to disagree with in such a presentation: was it not in another form the Harrod-Domar model Western economic journals had started to talk about? At the very next stage, though, Mahalanobis rendered them speechless with a two sector model of growth totally nihilistic to orthodox thinking.

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MAHALANOBIS might or might not have been told of the 1928 paper, published in an obscure Russian journal, by a Soviet engineer turned economist, G.A. Feldman, depicting a growth model for a closed system. While there was a certain similarity of treatment in the two formulations, Feldman was dealing with contemporary social reality in the Soviet Union.

(Continued on page 34)

CENTENARY HOMAGE

Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis

A True Bharat Ratna

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

With Chandraswamys and Harshad Mehtas, Dawood Ibrahims and Bal Thackerays the seamy side of political life has today come out in full view. One wonders in despair if these are the characters that will figure in the history books of the future, edging out others who in their own way contributed to the shaping of the country's destiny.

It is not unnatural for such thoughts to come up today as we find that there has been hardly any effort to tell the new generation about the persons who helped in the building of modern India. Great names stick on because these cannot be easily effaced. Even if all the history text books are destroyed, the names of Sardar Patel and Rajendra Prasad, Maulana Azad and Rajaji, not to speak of Gandhiji and Pandit Nehru will not be forgotten. But what about the whole host of others who, with all their shortcomings, brought their quota of contributions towards the making of this nation, its politics, economy and cultural life? Not that any of them was above any controversy; in fact, most of them welcomed controversy since they in their respective spheres were path-breakers and helped towards shaping the outlook of the nation as a whole. When Homi Bhabha pressed for atomic research, many shrugged it off as a luxury which an impoverished country could not afford to dabble in.

Another personality of that age is today remembered mostly by his critics. That was Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis. Incidentally, his birth centenary falls this week, on June 29. Today his name is recalled mostly by the new and enthusiastic worshippers of the Free Market ideology who blame Mahalanobis as one of the evil geniuses who forced the concept of planned economy on our political leaders, particularly Nehru.

If Mahalanobis had been living today, he would have relished that charge and got into an intense debate with gusto. Because, he believed like a true scientist that it is only through intensive debate and discussion one can work out a path of advance. Those of us in our young days who had the good fortune of knowing him at close quarters, were always struck by his insistence on listening to and examining a contrary point of view. For Mahalanobis, active interaction was imperative in any quest for truth. In other words, what the Greeks called dialectics in its untrammelled form.

Mahalanobis was really a multi-faceted personality. My earliest encounters with him were in my Presidency College days in the early thirties. I was not a student of science, but we had special regard for him because he always stood out among his colleagues as a proud Indian, a nationalist who while commanding respect as an outstanding teacher, never towed the line of the Raj. Every time there was an upheaval among the students—for Calcutta has always been the traditional centre of the militant youth—he was sent for. Mahalanobis commanded their esteem not because he subscribed to their creed but because he was never tired of trying to understand their viewpoint and acknowledged their motivation and dedication.

Mahalanobis was really a restless soul. It is, of course, widely known that starting as a brilliant student of physics and later as an honoured teacher of the subject, he turned to statistics and came to be internationally recognised as one of the pioneers in establishing statistics as a science necessary for the present-day world. Starting from a small room in the Physics Laboratory, the Statistical Institute grew before our very eyes into the giant complex which it became in twenty years, through the sheer grit and irrepressible urge of one man.

Even in his young days, Mahalanobis was known for his remarkable capacity to set people in motion. Many would not remember today that he in the twenties figured prominently in the Brahmo Samaj as the leader of the young radicals who tried to rejuvenate the movement. More conspicuous, of course, was his role as the builder of Tagor's Visva-bharati. One of the young adherents of the poet, Mahalanobis was the real organiser of the Visva-bharati from its inception. He was not part of the literati around Tagore, but he devoted himself towards building the great edifice that embodied his vision of making Santiniketan the seat of a truly universal culture—Visva-bharati.

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THE quality of Mahalanobis that I thought was truly great was his infinite urge to familiarise himself with all the currents of thought prevailing in his times. Like Homi Bhaba, I found that Mahalanobis on his own initiative established rapport with the leaders of the Left, and that included the entire spectrum from Yusuf Meherali to the Communists, whose party was then banned by the Raj. He was not excited by the day-to-day slogans of any moovement but tried to understand the thought-process behind the public position of any party or trend. And I have seen Mahalanobis taking pains to engage in extensive discussions with Acharya Kripalani and many others about the thrust of the Gandhian school of economics.

Mahalanobis might have known Nehru personally through his involvement with Tagore. I have personally seen how the links between the two were forged. Soon after his release from prison in 1945, when Panditji came to Calcutta and the overtures for the transfer of power could be heard for the first time, he spent a whole day with Mahalanobis at his residence, exchanging ideas about designing the future of the country about to be free. It was at that meeting that a regular link between the two was forged, with the drafting of Pitambar Pant, then a young favourite of Panditji just out of prison, to Mahalanobis' Statistical Institute, but really acting as the liaison between the two. This endured for two full decades and more. In fact, Pitambar became a permanent landmark in Mahalanobis' establishment, making signal contributions in the quest for planning on which the scientist and the political leader set out from those early days.

Mahalanobis' eagerness to build bridges with other schools of political thinking was not confined to his relationship with Nehru. He took the initiative in establishing such a relationship with others as well particularly of the radical school. If one were to look up the list of those who joined his establishment in those early days, one would fine that quite a few found their way there as Pitambar did. As a thinker concerned with designing the country's economic set-up, Mahalanobis wanted input from all sections seriously engaged in the same pursuit but from diverse points of view. As always, Mahalanobis was insistent on active interaction among them all.

This brings one to the current impression about Mahalanobis' contribution towards evolving a model of development for our country having just thrown away its colonial shackles. It is fashionable nowadays to brand him having imported the totalitarian Soviet model of development in our country, the evil genius who misled the gullible Nehru. Nothing could be farther from truth. An unmitigated rationalist, Mahalanobis was no advocate of any imported model. To him, there had to be a rationale of development based on the needs and perceptions of our own people; at the same time the rich variety of experiences of other countries had to be understood and assimilated by us.

Even without being economists some of us used to argue with him on the question of planning and its objective in our specific condition. Mahalanobis was clear in his outlook that a country of such diverse levels of development and perceptions of the people could not be put into the straitjacket of a highly-centralised authority, what is now called the command economy. Throughout Mahalanobis was an ardent advocate of mixed economy, a term which in our pristine Leftist ebullience we used to run down. For Mahalanobis, the classical model of the Industrial Revolution needed to be tempered with the experience and specific requirements of our country with its huge rural hinterland and a heavy burden of destitution perpetuated by the retreating colonial order.

As a scientist, he never subscribed to a dogmatic approach and as a rationalist he never imposed a line; he always strove for a solution through active interaction of different viewpoints and experiences. It was precisely on this score that Mahalanobis made a unique, historic contribution towards the methodology of evolving a strategy of development. With the ready support that he enlisted from Nehru, he took the initiative in inviting economists and social thinkers from practically all parts of the world. They came from the US, Britain, Poland, France, Russia and from China. In fact, the distinguished Chinese economist, Dr Chan Hanseng, did not belong to

(Continued on page 11)

Need for Scientific Temper

JAYANT V. NARLIKAR

A year ago I attended an international and inter-disciplinary conference dealing with the issues man has to face in the twentyfirst century. Naturally issues such as global environment, population control, food-availability, communications, education, science and technology, etc. featured prominently. As speaker after speaker covered a variety of topics of great relevance to the theme of the conference, I increasingly began to feel like a diner at a sumptuous buffet searching desperately for that tiny but vital item, namely, the salt shaker. By that pinch of salt I mean the scientific temper that is such an essential component of man's mental framework in his struggles to face the challenges of the present and the future. In this article I will discuss my own brief presentation on the subject at the conference along with certain other wider issues.

What is scientific temper? Why is its relevance being felt *now* rather than in the past? Is it an individual trait or does it also extend to societies, cultures, civilisations? To what extent is it prevalent today? What can be done to make it more widespread?

These are the questions I shall try to answer. But the bottom line has been stated much more effectively more than half a century ago by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru:

> The impact of science and the modern world have brought a greater appreciation of facts, a more critical faculty, a weighing of evidence, a refusal to accept tradition merely because it is tradition...
>
> But even today it is strange how we suddenly become overwhelmed by tradition, and the critical faculties of even intelligent men cease to function...Only when we are politically and economically free will the mind function normally and critically...(*Discovery of India*)

This was written during the British Raj. Today we live in a free India which is feeling its way towards economic prosperity. Yet we are still a long way away from achieving that scientific outlook which is so essential for our future well-being.

School children learning science are told that a scientific investigation consists of three steps: the experiment (E), the observations (O) and the deduction (D). This particular pattern of investigation has emerged after centuries of practice of science; and the scientific outlook that I want to talk about lies somewhere at the bottom of it. Science itself arose out of man's curiosity about Nature. Its origin lies in the questions "What?", "How?" and "Why?" that man put to himself and tried to answer. Each answer gave rise to many more questions. While a correct answer closed one particular subject, it at the same time opened up several new ones. And this proliferation of questions and answers had led to the vast and expanding field of science that we see today. Alexander, before he became 'Great', once complained that because of his father's conquests he would be left with no more worlds to conquer. I do not think that a scientist will ever be in that position in his battles to unravel the mysteries of Nature.

Dr Narlikar, who is an internationally renowned astrophysicist, is the Director of the Inter-University Centre of Astronomy and Astrophysics, Pune.

Let us see how the E-O-D process operates in science. As mentioned above, its beginning lies in some questions about Nature, let us say, about a certain phenomenon seen to occur in our physical world. The experimental part now comes in. The experiment is set up to observe the phenomenon in several different ways. The experimenter can, in many cases, alter the various operating conditions, or the so-called experimental parameters, to enable him to study the outcome in as many situations as possible. Another object of such experimentation is to eliminate the human element as far as possible and make the results objective.

The next step of observation is not as straightforward as it may sound. The result of the experiment may be qualitative or quantitative. In the latter case the scientist ends up with a set of figures. Before any deduction can be made it is often necessary to detect a pattern in the observed results, and this is where the so-called signal and noise come in. Here 'signal' represents the pattern which one is looking for against the background of a maze of data, called the 'noise'. The analogy of a specific sound signal against a noisy background is quite clear: How does one extract the signal? The human eye of an experienced experimenter is very often able to detect this. There are cases, however, of the poverbial needle-in-the-haystack type, where this is not possible and help must be sought from the statistical methods of data analysis. Recourse to statistical methods is in any case desirable to ensure objectivity. Unfortunately, there are situations where even statistical methods are not able to give unambiguous answers. The scientist is then back to the drawing board designing new and better experiments.

The last, but by no means the least, step in this process is that by deductions, that is, drawing conclusions from the experiment. The scientist is, of course, not satisfied with drawing the conclusion from the one experiment he has just performed. He is interested in making predictions for other situations not covered by his experiment, as for example, for situations beyond the range of his present experimental parameters. The purpose of this exercise is to prompt future scientific experiments to be designed to test these predictions.

This interplay between theory and observations is what keeps science going. Without scientific theories to guide him, the experimenter will not know exactly what to observe. It is only when the theoretical scientist tells his experimental counterpart some of his predictions that the latter can design suitable ways of testing them. Nor can the theoretician work in isolation for-ever. Unless he produces scientific predictions which can be experimentally tested, his theories will be considered sterile.

Littered with Sterile Knowledge

The history of science is littered with sterile theories and theories which were ultimately proved to be wrong. It is necessary to make a distinction between the two types. The former types, without any observable predictions, did not contribue to the growth of science. The latter types may have been considered viable for a while and prompted experiments which eventually led to their disproof. But, in this process, the scientist was also able to advance his knowledge.

Indeed, the modern scientist knows that no scientific theory, however right it may seem to be at present, will be entirely correct. Sooner or later some new experiment will be designed which will disprove some crucial prediction of the theory. For a while this may lead to an apparent breakdown of law and order in the regime of science; but experience has shown that a new enriched order eventually emerges. Thus the disproof of a well-established scientific theory is regarded as a very exciting event by the scientist. It means that Nature has considered man to have matured enough to appreciate yet one more of her bag of secrets! It was in this connection that Sir Hermann Bondi, the well-known astronomer, remarked:

> ...The essential thing in science is for the scientist to think up a theory. There is no way of mechanising this process; there is no way of breaking it down into a science factory. It always requires human imagination, and indeed in science we pay the highest respect to creativity, to originality. It is, of course, clear that since every theory must live dangerously, the casualty rate is pretty high. So we do not honour scientists for being right; it is never given to anybody to be always right. We honour scientists for being original, for being stimulating, for having started a whole line of work. Science is the most human of endeavours because it depends on cooperation, it depends on people testing each other's work and it depends on people taking notice of each other. (*Cosmology Now*, ed. L. John, 1973, BBC Publications)

However, the scientific outlook need not be the prerogative of the scientist alone. After all, it owes its origin to human curiosity about Nature and as such every one of us, whether a scientist or not, is entitled to it. Indeed, just as in the case of science, progress could be achieved only when the scientific outlook prevailed over innate conservatism, so in the case of a society of human beings this outlook acts as an antidote to the evils of prejudice and superstitions.

Superstitions are born out of ignorance of how Nature functions. Science is dedicated to the unravelling of the mysteries of Nature. As one particular mystery iss solved, we should expect the superstitions based on it to disappear. Yet, this does not always happen in practice because of the lack of scientific outlook in the typical human being. I give below one example.

The early human societies ascribed divine powers to planets. This assumption arose from ignorance of what planets are and how they move. Now that astronomy has answered most of the questions raised about planets by the primitive man, we should expect this assumption to be regarded as groundless. Yet this has not happened. Even in the technologically advanced countries this belief persists among sections of educated classes. In the mid-1970s a group of leading scientists in the West were signatories to a circular denouncing the very basis of this belief. I give below an extract from their statement:

> ...It is simply a mistake to imagine that the forces exerted by stars and planets at the moment of birth can in any way shape our futures. Neither is it true that the position of distant heavenly bodies make certain days or periods more favourable to particular kinds of action, or that the sign under which one was born determines one's compatibility or incompatability with other people...In these uncertain times many long for the comfort of having guidance in making decisions. They would like to believe in a destiny predetermined by astral forces beyond their control. However, we must all face the world, and we must realise that our futures lie in ourselves, and not in the stars...(*The Humanist*, September/October 1975).

Suppose a scientist is asked to examine this question: 'Do planets influence human destiny?' How will he go about testing the hypothesis that the answer is 'Yes'? He will not be satisfied by the prediction by a single person based on a single horoscope. First he will require a set of well-defined rules on which such predictions are based. The rules should be unambiguous so that different persons make the same prediction from the same horoscope. Next he will need to be convinced that these rules work in a statistically significant manner to discount the possibility of the prediction being right purely by chance. This will require a systematic study of a large number of cases under different conditions.

Let me give a simple example to illustrate my point of view. Suppose someone claims to predict with reasonable accuracy whether a tossed coin will fall with 'head' up or 'tail' up. Will a single toss decide the truth of his claim? We all know that anyone can predict correctly the outcome with fifty per cent accuracy. This chance element must somehow be reduced. Suppose we ask him to perform this prediction-test 100 times, and he predicts correctly 50 times. Again we will argue that this is not a significant indicator of his predictive power. But suppose he is accurate 51 times. Do we give him credit? What if he is accurate 70 times? The statistician comes to our rescue here. He has devised tests to decide whether the success achieved in a particular experiment is purely due to chance or to some other factor (as for example, the ability to predict correctly in the above cases or the possibility of the coin being biased).

Negative Results

Likewise, tests have to be made of the above hypothesis about planets. Such tests as have been conducted so far by scientists have shown negative results. But again, it is not always necessary to call upon the professional scientist to perform such tests. The educated common man can himself sift the evidence provided he adopts an objective outlook.

Let me give two illustrative examples of experiments of this kind conducted in the United States to test the scientific predictivity of astrology.

In the first test conducted by B.J. Silverman[1] who sampled the marriage and divorce rates in Michigan in 1967 and 1968. His sample was large, containing 2978 marriages and 478 divorces. Their birth charts were examined by astrologers who were asked to opine on whether the horoscopes matched sufficiently to lead them to conclude that the couple's marriage would be long lasting and happy. The astrologers (using whatever criteria they had) made out two lots, one with matching and the other with conflicting horoscopes. These 'predictions' were then compared with the actual state of marriages of these couples, some of whom were happily married while others had divorces, broken marriages, etc. It was then a simple matter to make a comparison between the actual and the predicted divisions of the sample. Rigorous statistical analyses demonstrated that there was no correlation between predictions and the actual results.

The second test carried out by French *et al.*[2] besides drawing a similar conclusion throws some light on the psychology of the individual who is attracted towards astrological predictions despite whatever scientific temper he/she may possess. This aspect is sometimes called the 'Barnum Effect', coming from the famous Barnum and Bailey Circus in the United States. The circus owner P.T. Barnum was once asked why his circus was so popular. He explained that the circus contained a variety of acts of which at least one would appeal to each and every individual who would, therefore, sit through the entire performance, despite getting bored by many of the other acts. Astrologers likewise quote their assessment for an individual in a vague but all pervasive form, such that at least a portion of it may be found appealing by the individual. A horoscope reading of this kind is known as the Barnum Interpretation (BI). A typical BI may be stated as follows:

> You have a great need for other people to like you and admire you. You have a tendency to be critical of

> yourself. You have a great deal of unused capacity which you have not used to your advantage. While you have some personality weaknesses, you are generally able to compensate for them. Your sexual adjustment has presented problems for you. Disciplined and self-controlled outside you tend to be worrisome and insecure inside. At times you have serious doubts as to whether you have made the right decision or done the right thing. You prefer a certain amount of change and variety and become dissatisfied when hemmed in by restrictions and limitations. You pride yourself on being an independent thinker and do not accept others' statements without satisfactory proof. You have found it unwise to be too frank in revealing yourself to others. At times you are extroverted, affable and sociable, while at other times you are introverted, wary and reserved. Some of your aspirations tend to be pretty unrealistic. Security is one of your major goals in life.

Now, the experiment consisted of 52 individuals whose birth particulars were given to noted astrologers for making up interpretations of the personality of the individual. Each person was then given three interpretations: (i) the one applicable to his/her birth chart, (ii) another one belonging to some other individual in the group, and (iii) the BI. All persons were then asked to rank on a scale of five the applicability of each interpretation to his/her own personality.

Almost invariably the BI turned out to be the most popular with an average rating of 3.69 out of five. The other two interpretations hardly differed, with (i) scoring 3.08 and (ii) 3.06. This means that the individuals were swayed by the Barnum effect and also there was no distinction between 'genuine' and 'false' horoscopes readings!

I could go on and on just to illustrate that astrology has been tested for a scientific basis of predictivity in numerous ways by numerous research workers on numerous occasions—and has always been found wanting.

Individually or as part of a larger group man has always lived by certain traditional beliefs. These beliefs are inextricably mixed with his cultural and religious heritage. Inevitably conflicts arise whenever the critical appraisal inherent in the scientific temper is applied to these beliefs.

Some conflicts arise because the beliefs or the rituals they imply had a rational basis in the olden days but which they no longer possess today. Some rituals had a symbolic meaning in the social ambience of several centuries ago: today they have become irrelevant The question arises: what should one do in case such a conflict arises?

This issue has become more urgent in view of what Alvin Toeffler calls the 'Future Shock'. The rapid inputs from science and technology in the last century—more so in the last few decades—have had severe repercussions for human societies the world over. How to adjust to the rapid growth of knowledge, to the many ways energy can be used to upgrade human existence, to the many effective ways one may destroy human existence, to the severe impact of all this on our natural habitat...? These are questions which perhaps could have been handled had the societies been granted the luxury of ample time. This, unfortunately, is not the case. The response has to be quick to a rapidly changing scenario. How to absorb the 'new' while holding on to the 'traditional'?

On the 'traditional' side we have the traditional virtues of the individual's responsibility to the society, the society's commitment to ensure the well-being of its members and the individual and social commitment to preserve the natural habitat around us. Armed with these virtues man can assess what science has to offer: he can take judicious decisions on what to accept and what to reject. This is where the scientific temper comes to his help.

The technologically advanced nations of the West have been experiencing the ill effects of uncontrolled impact of science and technology on the society. The destructive nuclear arsenal, the excessive industrial pollution, the enforced idleness and consequent psychological problems of mechanisation, etc. are there to see. Does this mean that we must put a stop to all scientific and technological development?

Such a response, already advocated by a few in the developing nations, indicates a panic reaction. Given the traditional virtues mentioned above as guiding principles it should be possible to take a rational path that skirts around the above pitfalls.

Miracles of Science Benefit All

Indeed, at first sight these problems before us appear to be formidable if not insurmountable. Yet, we have only to look at the remarkable progress of science over the last few decades to see that a properly channelled scientific approach holds out hope for the future. The achievements of space technology with such highlights as the manned trips to the Moon, the landing on Mars and the SITE programme in our country, the rapid growth of communications which has dramatically brought the far corners near, the advances in medicine, biology, agriculture—are they not scientific miracles happening before our own eyes and achieved during less than the span of a generation? Unlike the so-called miracles of the so-called godmen, *the miracles of science benefit not one single individual, but a whole class of humanity*. They benefit the poor as well as the rich. The invention of electric power not only runs the gadgets of the rich, it also provides light to the remote villages.

The developed nations have recognised these facts and they not only support science in general but also continue to encourage basic research, which at first may appear 'useless' but may lead to useful applications like those just mentioned. For us to ignore basic research at this stage would mean thaat we will have to keep on importing new ideas from abroad. This would be contrary to our policy of self-reliance. India has plenty of talent for basic research, most of which is untapped. Suitable support for basic research will unearth this talent and bring in its own rewards in the long term if not immediately. Right now I can think of one analogy to illustrate my point of view. Imagine a country which has vast untapped resources of oil, but which will not search for these for reasons of heavy financial outlay. Such a country will forever be dependent on oil imported from abroad. And, finally let me emphasise that basic research does not require heavy financial outlay. We must, however, ensure with adequate safeguards that the research produced is of first class quality.

When Lord Krishna finished telling the *Gita* to Arjuna, he ended by saying:

> *Vimṛsyai'tad as'esena'*
> *yathe' cchasi tatha kuru*
> (Reflect over what I have said fully and then do what you wish.)

In a sense this is what the scientific temper calls upon us to do: to weigh in all the evidence and then decide what is best.

As has happened in science, occasional 'wrong turnings' with false ideas have caused deviations from the path of progress; so such attempts to decide what is best, may occasionaly lead to wrong decisions. But, the self-correcting tendency of science will operate here too, telling us that we have taken the wrong turning and we need to go back and rectify the mistake. The scientific temper guides us towards recognising this eventuality and to allow for mid-course corrections. I am confident that if, and only if, we are not blinded by traditions and dazzled by science but keep our visors open and our minds alert our country will make a triumphant entry into the twentyfirst century. ■

(Courtesy: *Man and Development*, March 1993)

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2. French, C.C., Fowler, M., McCarthy, K. and Peers, D., "Belief in Astrology: A Test of the Barnum Effect" in *The Skeptical Inquirer*, pp. 166-172, 15, 1991.

NIKHIL : A True Bharat Ratna

(Continued from page 6)

the Communist Party but was active in Madam Soong Chinling's Democratic Party which took to Sun Yatsen's enlightened ideals. A well-known specialist on agrarian problems, he spent quite some time in the Statistical Institute.

Such expansive discussions in which participants from abroad interacted freely with our economists of diverse schools, both official and nonofficial, led to the drafting of the plan-frame for the Second Five Year Plan. And the plan-frame itself was thrown open for national debate for one full year before the government finalised the Second Plan. Compare this democratic approach to reach a national consensus on the country's economic strategy with the manner in which the free-market brand of economic reforms is now being hustled through. Under cover of the panic created by the balance-of-payments crisis, structural adjustments have been introduced as per the Fund-Bank prescription without caring for a national debate.

Here lies the difference between the genuine democratic urge of a truly scientific mind like Mahalanobis and the smart operaters of the economic establishment of today. No wonder the greatness of a Homi Bhaba or a Prasanta Mahalanobis is bereft of any protocol recognition. No award for these true Bharat Ratnas of our times. ■

NOTIFICATION

Lok Jumbish Project has been started in Rajasthan for providing basic education to all by the year 2000 through the process of peoples movement, involvement and upgradation of capability of teachers and improvement of quality of primary education. Applications are invited for the following posts at headquarters of **Lok Jumbish Parishad**, an autonomous and independent body located at Jaipur :

S. No.	Designation of post and indicative scale of pay	Eligibility and qualifications
1.	**Deputy Director/Academic Fellow** - Scale 3200-4625/3700-5700. (two posts at headquarters) - These officers will be responsible for programmes such as training/nonformal education/curriculum development as well as for implementation of the project in the field.	Permanent employees of Education Departments of Govt. of India or Govt. of Rajasthan or any Govt. or non Govt., educational Institution or a University in minimum scale of pay of 2650-4500/3000-5000 with sound knowledge of principles and practices and interest in teacher education/ educational research/primary education/nonformal education with a minimum of 7 years experience of teaching/educational administration.
2.	**Coordinator, Women's development** - Scale 3200-4625/3700-5700 (one post at headquarters) - This officer will be responsible for women's development programme and for implementation of Lok Jumbish Project in the field.	(1) Permanent employees of Education Departments or Departments dealing with Women's Development of Govt. of India or Govt. of Rajasthan, or any Govt. or non-Govt. educational institution or a University in minimum scale of pay of Rs. 2600-4500/3000-5000 with sound knowledge of principles and practices in Women's Development and basic education with a minimum of 7 years experience in teaching/education administration/ women's development. (2) Persons with experience of work in voluntary agencies or autonomous organisations with experience referred to at (2) above with minimum of 7 years experience at senior responsible level. Selected persons will be appointed on a contract basis on a consolidated pay which will be determined on the basis of experience and qualifications and would be between 5000-7000 p.m.
3.	**Academic Officer/Associate Academic Fellow.** - Scale 2600-4500/3000-5000 (two posts at headquarters) - These officers will have role at responsible level in academic programmes and implementation of Lok Jumbish Project in the field.	(1) Permanant employees of Education Departments of Govt.of India or Govt.of Rajasthan or any Government or non-government educational institution or a university in minimum scale of pay of 2000-3500/2200-4000 with sound knowledge of principles and practices in basic education/ educational research/women's development/teacher education etc.with minimum of 5 years experience in teaching/educational administration/ women development. (2) Persons with experience at responsible level in voluntary agencies or autonomous organisations of at least 5 years in areas referred to at (1). Selected persons will be appointed on a contract basis on a consolidated pay wich will be deremined on the basis of experience qualifications and would be between 4500-6500 p. m.

PAY FIXATION

Scales of pay given in column No. 2 are indicative, Suitable candidates may be considered for higher scale of pay. Persons coming from Govt. service, autonomous bodies and educational institutions may opt

- for fixation under Rajasthan Service Rules in the indicative scale of pay, or
- for promotion to the next higher post in their respective service rules, in which case their pay will be fixed according to relevant provisions of Rajasthan Service Rules, or
- to retain their scale of pay with deputation allowance according to Rajasthan Service Rules.

CONDITIONS OF APPOINTMENT :

1. The maximum age limit for posts in categories 1 and 2 is 50 years and in category 3, 45 years.
2. For the present all appointments will be till the end of may, 1994. Decision regarding further extension will be made in March, 94.
3. Notwithstanding 2 above, Lok Jumbish Parishad reserves the right to terminate contract/deputation on a month's notice.
4. The special benefit of promotion, pay fixation etc. is confined to the duration of appointment in Lok Jumbish Parishad.
5. If a selected person receives promotion or increase in pay on the post on which he holds lien, corresponding benefit will be given to him in Lok Jumbish Parishad.
6. All applicants should send their applications through their Heads of Departments or Head of the Institutions.
7. While making applications information should be furnished regarding 1 post applied for, 2 Name, 3. Father's/husband's name, 4. Date of birth, 5. SC/ST if applicable, 6. Educational qualifications, 7. Present scale of pay and place of posting, 8. Date since present scale is drawn, 9. Date of appointment, 10. Postal address, 11. Signatures on application with date, 12. Forwarding remarks of Head of Department/Institution.
8. Application should be received in the office of **Project Director, Lok Jumbish Parishad, P. O. Box No. 411 GPO, Jaipur** within 21 days of publication of this notification.

Project Director

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The Institution of Religion Revisited

M. AFZAL

Dr Afzal, an eminent Pakistani educationist and scholar, is Professor Emeritus, Punjab University, Lahore, former Chairman, Pakistan University Grants Commission, and the first Vice-Chancellor, International Islamic University, Islamabad. He was Federal Minister for Education, Pakistan (when Zia-ul-Haq was the country's President). He read the following paper at the Pakistan Association of Inter-Religious Dialogue, Lahore on April 29, 1993. —Editor

Roman Catholicism, which forms a major component of the Pakistan Association of Inter-Religious Dialogue, has one outstanding feature, and that is *confession*. The Islamic equivalent is *tauba*; but somehow, the latter seems to be easier. It really takes a lot of courage to confess before a human being even though he may be acting as an agent of the Almighty. Let me begin with a confession before this audience. I call it a confession as people are shy to talk about such things. However, before I do so I am going to preface it with a couple of early childhood experiences.

In my childhood, perhaps as a student of class five or six, I became very religious under the influence of my elder brother who had devoted himself to religious practices after his Master's degree in Science. He too was probably influenced by a person who claimed to be a *Pir* or Divine. I am talking of the years 1929-30. Though seeped in religion, and a zealous observer at that, the emotion manifested itself as subservience in form alone without a knowledge base. I did not understand religious customs or ceremonies. While walking along with other schoolmates from the village to my school at a distance of about two miles in Jullundur Cantonment, now a part of East Punjab in India, we used to come across, early in the morning, usually at road crossings, baskets of fruit as offerings to some gods by the local Hindu population. We never hesitated to pick up the fruit that could be pealed, and enjoyed eating it. We learnt later that these offerings were expected to transmit the misery, misfortune and disease of those making the offerings to others. Obviously, nothing happened to us.

Childhood pranks, like lack of reverence for the offerings, were my first contact with supersition and occult religious practices, and my first lesson in rational behaviour. They aroused my curiosity. There was a large graveyard on the outskirts of our village, used by the population of Jullundur Cantonment. The villagers used to be up at midnight on Thursdays to witness a procession seven daemons or evil spirits with torches in their hands. Starting from underneath a huge old banyan tree in the midst of a pool of stagnant water in a vast Parade Ground, the procession walked a distance of about a kilometre only to vanish inside the graveyard. At that, the village folk would make obeisance and seek God's mercy, lest the evil spirits invade the village. The procession appeared week after week and people were so terrified that no one would even talk about it. I was overpowered by curiosity and one night, alongwith a few friends, decided to observe the phenomenon from a distance. To our astonishment, we saw the caretaker of the graveyard there. Alongwith six of his followers, they lit the hurricane lamps and marched in procession. The caretaker, known as *Sufi*, posed himself as a *Pir* or Divine, with a fairly large following including some educated people. We were elated in having exploded the myth and as a consequence the imposter *Pir* left the village. We learnt later that he had migrated to Sind where he was in a flourishing 'business' until his death. I am sure, he must have been buried in a big mausoleum which would be visited by throngs of people begging for bounties from God through the intercession of the dead charlatan.

The two examples mentioned by me are the type of experiences that serve to nurture the seed of doubt and breed curiosity to satisfy it. The experience also puts one on road to knowledge.

Let me come to the confession now. During those days, a quixotic idea overpowered my mind. On my way to school in Jullundur Cantonment, there was a large and magnificent Church, perhaps Roman Catholic. I knew a number of Hindu and Sikh schoolmates and class fellows, but was hardly conscious of the difference in various faiths. However, I was curious: why is a person a Muslim, a Hindu, a Sikh or a Christian? Why shouldn't one profess all religions? We used to enter the Church compound, often to pick up ripe berries. I took courage and entered the Church one day, to embrace the religion of the people in the Church. Considering me an urchin, the strangely looking creatures (nuns) chased me out of the Church precints. My curiosity cured, I never attempted to go to a Temple or a Gurdwara for fear of the treatment I would get there. This was my first but not the last contact with inter-faith experience. Thereafter, now and then, I always made it a point to study various sacred books, literature on comparative religion, and not hesitate to attend a service on a number of occasions at places of worship of different faiths, including a Church, a Synagogue, a Hindu Temple and a Gurdwara. The nearest to my ideal was the Willard Hall of Cornell University in the USA where I was studying for my doctoral degree. The followers of different faiths there used the same building for prayers, the Muslims and the Jews sharing the same room. How I wish that the Indian Government constructs a Temple, a Mosque, a Church and a Gurdwara around the ruins of the Babri Mosque, preserving the ruins as a standing "monument" to intolerance, social disgrace, and human stupidity.

The Service of Religion to Humanity

Religion, as an institution, has rendered great service to mankind but, at the same time, has caused it enormous harm; service in the sense that it has "taught man what he did not know"[1] and has helped in maintaining the moral fabric of societies; and harm, because the institution has been abused by imprudent individuals and leaders for personal gain. It is unfortunate that this manipulated exploitation has been the cause of unlimited dissensions and destruction throughout the history of mankind.

It was undboutedly the institution of religion that maintained cohesion between primitive groups and balance among civilised societies. It is indeed marvellous how ignorant and savage people were persuaded to accept norms of group and social behaviour by inculcating in them a faith in the Supreme Being and fear of punishment in the life hereafter. Education has refined these norms, but it is doubtful if education alone could have brought about this miracle. The consciousness and development of moral values is thus the positive gain bestowed upon humanity by the development of religious institutions.

A major contribution of this divine institution is the guidance and education of human beings in the absence of a teacher, imparted as it was, through an agent of the Supreme Teacher, referred to variously as a "god" or a "prophet". The institution forms the basis of all human knowledge and gave birth to philosophy, the mother of all knowledge. Human thinking, evolved on the basis of philosophy, has led mankind to the frontiers of modern knowledge in the arts and sciences alike. Faith in the Supreme Being and the contribution of transcendental philosophy to the betterment of humanity are correlated. It is faith, and faith alone, that has been the prime mover and motivation for service to mankind. The question, however, is how is this faith or *iman* strengthened?

To philosopher Hobbes,[2] "faith is a gift of God which man can neither give nor take away by promises of rewards or menaces of torture". Adds Hobbes, that faith depends "only upon certainty or probability of arguments drawn from reason or from something men believe already". According to him, faith does not come "by supernatural inspiration or infusion" but "by education, discipline, correction, and other natural ways, by which God worketh them in his elect, at such time as he thinketh fit".

Modern philosophy lays emphasis on the strengthening of belief based on education which in turn depends to a greater extent on an enquiring personality. Doubt is the springboard to belief. It leads to the acquisition of knowledge in order to satisfy itself. This in turn strengthens belief. Once that objective is achieved it results in scientific and personal development contributing to the development of mankind, because the strength of belief incites and induces action. This philosophical truth has been expressed by Dr Sir Muhammad Iqbal, as follows:

> *Huma-i-Ilm ta uftad bedamat,*
> *Yaqeen kam kun, griftar-i-shakey bash.*
> *Amal kwahi? Yaqeen ra pukhta tar kun,*
> *Yakey juey, yake bini, yakey bash.*
> *(Eliminate belief and entertain doubt*
> *To reach the apex of knowledge;*
> *For action, strengthen your belief;*
> *Seek, examine and re-affirm,*
> *Waver not in your objective.)*[3]

Failure of Religion as an Institution

What went wrong? Each religion emphasised peace, tolerance and the good of Humanity. And, each religion went astray. The message of peace was replaced by the preaching of hatred; tolerance yielded to unbridled capriciousness, and the mercy of God gave place to dogmatism, bigotry and militancy. More crimes have been committed and more murderous wars have been fought in the name of religion than spreading the word of God. The practice of religion has not eliminated confusion, disagreement, selfishness, persecution, tyranny, torture, rape, and murder. One is constrained to reiterate: Religion! What crimes are committed in thy name?

One of the major reasons for the failure has ironically been the emphasis on an individual who, as all religions assert, continues to live after death and is individually accountable to God for his actions on the day of judgment, or in the processs of the transmigration of soul. As a result, the institution is considered to be an ideology, believed to be a closed system and defended as such. The stronger the belief in ideology, the more the readiness to kill others or willingness to die for a cause; for, such an action will demonstrate a greater love for God. The person so inclined will, thus, enjoy the fruits of his sacrifice in the life hereafter. It seems that the descent of gods in person and the prophets or *avatars* has been ineffective.

The misplaced belief in one's own creed generates hatred for all other faiths. It precludes any attempt at a sympathetic study of other religions so as to gain further enlightenment of one's own faith and thus contribute to the existing store of knowledge. Even if an attempt is made, it is based on prejudices, biases and unverified historical evidence. These biased studies become a reference point for future scholars and in this manner bias against the faith is perpetuated. For example, Hindus and Muslims have been living in the subcontinent for centuries but neither the one nor the other has ever seriously attempted to study and appreciate each other's beliefs and traditions. The unconscious acceptance of customs is apparent but no conscious attempt has ever been made to understand each other. The only exception was the *Bhakti* Movement of the sixteenth century. It failed because the objective was a merger of religions rather than understanding each other at the intellectual level. Sikhism was the outcome of the Movement, and an attempt at unifying the Hindu and Muslim faiths, but it soon became a separate Sect and then a Religion.

It must be said to the credit of Hinduism that they do not regard any internal sect and even a new religion remotely related to it such as Buddhism and Jainism as outside the fold of Hinduism. Christians to them belong to a different faith but not inimical to Hinduism. Only Muslims are *malich*, worse than untouchables, and this is because of Muslim occupation of India for about eight centuries. However, good Muslims are given respect, particularly the *Sufis* and pious religious personalities. At places they are even worshipped in the same way as the Muslims would. However, by and large, followers of one religion consider the followers of others to be in the wrong. They are idolatrous, superstitious, heretical and schismatic. As chosen people of God, they alone are eligible for His graces in this world and in the life hereafter.

The second major reason for the failure of religion as an institution is the presence of people in each religion who misuse the institution for their own ends. The prominent amongst these were the Kings and rulers who, despite their misdeeds and their desire to perpetuate tyranny, became God's chosen representatives on earth. They became the Defenders of the Faith and appropriated to themselves divine authority by propounding the theory of the Divine Right of Kings. In the East, they were *zille Ilahi*, the Shadow of God or His direct representatives. This is equally true of ancient, medieval and modern times.

The Greeks (and Romans) were, perhaps, most honest. To them gods and men belonged to the same family and their mutual contact, leading sometimes to inter-marriages, enabled them to remain a well-knit society. Goddess Venus is shown having a stolen enjoyment with Mars, god of war. Virgil has immortalised the occasion in *Aeneid (VIII)*:

> *The Goddess ceased and with the soft embrace*
> *Of snowy arms about his body wound*
> *Fondled him, as he faltered. Quick he caught*
> *The wonted fire, the old heat pierced his heart,*
> *Ran through his melting frame; as oftentimes*
> *A fiery rift, burst by the thunder-clap,*
> *Runs quivering down the cloud, with flash of light.*
> *(387-393)*

Robert Parker, the writer of the essay "Greek Religion" says:

> To those used to Christianity, Greek religion often seems a strangely amoral affair. Man was not for Greeks a sinful being in need of redemption, piety was not a matter of perpetual moral endeavour under the

> watchful guidance of conscience. The gods excelled in strength and skill more obviously than in the quieter virtues. Indeed their behaviour in myth was often scandalous:
>
> There might you see the gods in sundry shapes
> Committing heady riots, incest, rapes.
>
> *But even these easy-going rulers insisted (Zeus in particular) on certain standards of behaviour without which life would have dissolved into barbarism. They punished offences against parents, guests/hosts, suppliants, and the dead.*[4]

We have not been as lucky as the Greeks were who maintained perfect harmony in the society of gods and men. Our despotic rulers, the civil and military dictators and even the lesser gods, the democratic leaders, tend to become demigods. They misappropriate and misuse their authority and indulge in exploitation in the name of religion, making it a palliative for the people, and converting the religious institution into an opium for the masses. What is strange is that in this attempt they are fully supported by the priesthood and the religious leaders who have always wanted to be a part of the exploiters of divine authority. The illiterate public, fed on this hash, are always prepared to sacrifice their lives for the glory of their patrons in the hope of leading a better life in the world hereafter. The others have no option but to surrender and obey.

Belief in superstition has persisted throughout human history, which is the third reason for the corruption religious institutions. Coupled with religious belief, it has taken away the "human" aspect from mankind, for, it has formed the basis of man's desire to be superhuman. Giving rise to popular delusions, it led to the mass mania, scams, grand scale madness and deceptions, as discussed by Charles Mackay in his classical book on the subject.[5] The "Religious manias," he says, "have been purposely excluded...a mere list of them would alone be sufficient to occupy a volume." In the Preface of the 1852 edition, the author says:

> We see one nation suddenly seized, from its highest to its lowest members, with a fierce desire of military glory; another as suddenly becoming crazed upon a religious scruple; and neither of them recovering its senses until it has shed rivers of blood and sowed a harvest of groans and tears, to be reaped by its posterity. At an early age in the annals of Europe its population lost their wits about the sepulchre of Jesus, and crowded in frenzied multitudes to the Holy Land; another age went mad for fear of the devil, and offered up hundreds of thousands of victims to the delusion of witchcraft.

The blend of religion and superstition has made the one indistinguishable from the other. While the population at large, including even the educated people, remain indifferent, their attitude lends strength to superstitious beliefs. When irrational beliefs are challenged by enquiring minds, religious institutions are accused of rigidity, conventionalism and traditionalism. No religion has an inbuilt system of adapting to change and even if there is an attempt, it results in the addition of yet another sect. This becomes another reason for the failure of religious institutions to maintain any flexibility.

Yet, another reason for the failure of religious institution is antagonism to rational thought and intellectual development. Religion which is the mother of all philosophy and consequently of all human knowledge, including modern science, uses all its spiritual and divine powers to oppose all innovation. While Bruno suffered throughout his life at the hands of "hounds of the Lord" (*domini canes*), the corps of the Inquisition, and was ultimately burnt alive, it has taken three hundred years to exonerate Galileo in his guilt for expressing a simple scientific fact. Liberal thought has been strangulated and its supporters have been tortured and executed. Religious institutions dub it as apostasy. Those on the other side of the fence have defended their freedom to think against the highly organised forms of thought control and have carried their struggle towards intellectual freedom. Robertson calls it "conscious practice of criticism in the spirit of pure truth-seeking" which is "profoundly important to moral and intellectual health..and one of the developments of the slight primary capacity of man to doubt, to reason, to improve on past thinking, to assert his personality as against even sacrosanct and menacing authority."[6]

A Plea for a New Reformation

The ecclesiastical revolution called Reformation was a revolt against an established religious institution. It was partly political, partly religious and mainly an attempt by Kings and Princes to satisfy their greed for wealth and power. In England, it was the personal need of the despotic king, Henry VIII, to satisfy his lust for marriages and seek a divorce which the Pope had refused. The movement led to a great schism in the established religious institution, and instead of leading to any religious reforms, it resulted in the establishment of innumerable sects, thus weakening the existing institution. Philosopher Whitehead's verdict on the change is worth attention:

> Protestant Christianity, so far as concerns the institutional and dogmatic forms in which it flourished for three hundred years as derived from Luther, Calvin, and the Anglican Settlement, is showing all the signs of a steady decay. It dogmas no longer dominate; its divisions no longer interest; its institutions no longer direct the patterns of life.[7]

Proliferation of sects is not peculiar to Christendom. Any new ideas and any attempt to introduce a reform in a religion, has led to the breeding of additional sects, usually at daggers drawn with all earlier sects. A time has come when religion as an institution should take stock of its performance, and within the limits of its mandate try to alter its methods of approach to the followers of a particular institution and towards those whom it wants to attract.

Religion needs to make a rational study of its origin, development and the present state of affairs. Such a study should note its strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures, and the causes for its weakness and failures. Each religion has flexibility enough to look at its fundamental principles and to reinterpret them so as to create harmony within changing circumstances.

A serious attempt should be initiated to make a comparative study of religions as part of the educational system. The study should be scientific and not made from the point of view of appreciating or denying the fundamental precepts of a religion. Special attention should be paid to the social benefits and gain to humanity as a whole that a religion could offer. Removal of religious, racial and ethnic prejudices should form a part of the teaching.

The method of propagation of religion or proselytising needs to be reviewed. Instead of aggressive preaching, each religion should excel in service to communities. Establishment of health and educational institutions, as has been done by one religious institution and has reaped its benefits, need to form a major part of the programme. In short, competition in service to humanity rather than antagonism should be the major, or rather the only, method of approaching people belonging to other religious institutions.

Each religious institution needs to establish a supreme Council like a Supreme Court to handle all differences among sects and various religious institutions. There should even be international bodies like the United Nations, the Security Council and the International Court of Justice to encourage inter-faith relations and, when necessary, to submit conflicting claims to arbitration.

It is emphasised that the real culprit in human conflicts is not the religious institution, though it is often used as a weapon for self-aggrandisement, equally by political and religious leaders. Man by nature is a coward and is engulfed by fear. His overpowering need is security for which he wants to be powerful and seeks help from spiritual powers. According to philosopher Hobbes, he has three basic drives, surely, competition, diffidence, and glory: "the first maketh men invade for gain, the second for safety; and the third for reputation".[8] These needs have been further elaborated by psychologist Maslow who terms the *basic* needs as physiological, psychological and social. the physiological needs include need for food and security, also referred to in the Quran: "Who hath fed them against hunger; and hath made them safe from fear."[9] Fear is the basis of creation in Hindu sacred writings. A quotation from *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* is of interest:

> In the beginning, this (universe) was but the self of a human form. He reflected and found nothing else but himself...He was afraid. Therefore people (still) are afraid to be alone. He thought, 'If there is nothing else but me, what am I afraid of?' From that alone his fear was gone, for what was there to fear? It is from a second entity that fear comes.[10]

The instinct of 'fear' in man has inculcated in him an urge to struggle for existence contributing to his instinctive aggressive behaviour. In accordance with the Theory of Evolution, all species are capable of a geometric rate of increase. However, the resources of the environment cannot support the increase. Thus, individuals and groups strive to survive and are forced to struggle for existence to fulfil their basic needs. In doing so they use every available weapon. Religion as an instrument of mind control has been a potent weapon with those who have access to it.

With the growth of Science and scientific thinking man should not be handicapped to tackle aggression and bigotry resulting from rigid attitudes. The aggressive instinct should be considered a sickness and subjected to scientific study. So far it has been tackled by psychological research. However, the latest studies on brain and the development of the science of microbiology should help in finding the brain cells that cause aggressive behaviour and the development of genes that would cure the cells leading to aggression. Says the Bible:

> *Ask, and it shall be given you;*
> *Seek and you shall find;*
> *Knock, and it shall be opened to you.*
>
> (Matthew 7:7) ■

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Two Big Banks

M.A. SREENIVASAN

Among the most important and signficant changes that have taken place in recent times is the emergence of two leading banks and their enormous power and influence over the economics and politics of our country: The World Bank, and the Vote Bank.

The first is known all over the world, the second is hardly known. It has no office or building and shuns publicity. The first sustains our country's economics; the second its politics. The first is the source of funds, the second is the fountainhead of power, political power.

First about the World Bank.

Giant leaps forward in the fields of transport and communication have made the world a close neighbourhood. The rich nations and the poor live in the same street, as it were, the rich in the North side, the poor in the South.

Observing at close range the glaring difference in the lives and living conditions between the neighbours and realising the pressing need to take steps to narrow the widening gap and live in harmony and peace, the affluent nations—led by the USA—organised the World Bank.

The USA is the major shareholder of the World Bank. Though, technically, its share is 20 per cent, its real contribution is much more. The other rich nations contribute a lesser percentage. India's share is about three per cent.

The World Bank is a veritable *Kamdhenu*. So limitless seem its resources, so ready it is to give generously. There is hardly anything, any want, from the biggest to the smallest, from a big dam across the Narmada, to desilting of minor tanks in a State and providing drinking water in a city, for which we do not seek and get its aid.

Not only has it rescued our nation from a serious financial crisis, a near-bankruptcy, with billions of dollars. It has also poured and continues to pour billions of dollars of aid to enable our government to liberalise and restructure its economy. In the process, it has also restructured, reshaped the thinking and views of the people.

There was a time when figures with eight and ten zeros seemed astronomical, mind-boggling. Now figures of billions of dollars, and of hundreds of crores of rupees leave our minds unboggled. While we, common folk still regard a debt as a sacred obligation, and widows and sons regard it their first duty to free themselves from *rinanubandham*, the bond of debt. Mahatma Gandhi paid with his life in defending it. We now remain unfazed over reports that our nation's external debt is over two hundred thousand crores and that interest on it is paid by further borrowing.

It was not so long ago when the silver rupee, twanged by the shopkeeper, contained its tola weight of the metal. Inflation, the silent thief in the night, has stolen the silver. Devaluation has followed devaluation. The rupee note floats or flutters in the global winds. The Reserve Bank has found that the rupee note costs more to print than its worth.

Some of the educated among us are concerned about the future, wonder how long this bonanza, this abundant monsoon of billions of dollars of aid way of soft loans will last. They have read the statement of the Finance Minister that "there is nothing immoral in borrowing from international financial institutions, and that most people become rich by borrowing and making effective use of the money", and the statement of the President of the World Bank that the loan is intended to be productive, calculated to fulfil the object of reducing poverty and not wastefully used.

They see reports that a staggering sum of six and odd billions of dollars of foreign exchange equal to twenty thousand crores of rupees is spent on import of petroleum products and nearly ten thousand crores in rupees of it burnt by the increasing number of trucks, buses, motor cars, and two-wheelers that are jamming traffic on the roads.

Can this burning of borrowed dollars be said to be effective use of the money, and not wasteful? they ask themselves.

Those who have witnessed the scenario during the Second World War recall the days when supply of petrol and diesel was nil, or severely cut, and hundreds of officials in Delhi, from Secretaries to the Government to lower officials, rode bicycles to their office, when railway engines carried loads of firewood to fuel the boiler; and motor cars carried bags of charcoal to provide gas for the engine.

The USA is the major contributor to the World Bank and the IMF. What will happen if, God forbid, the USA is displeased if India does not agree to the "economic surgery" prescribed by the World Bank, or fails to observe "economic benchmarks", or protest against the contoversial provision of GATT, or Dunkel or Super-301, and cuts the contribution to the World Bank or the IMF?

They are puzzled, surprised that the political leaders in charge of the country's destiny seem blind to authentic well-documented articles in papers, and periodicals and warnings of the danger ahead.

Seeing the announcement of a lecture on "The Indian Economic Scene" by a well-known politician now out of office those in the city decided to attend it.

At the end of the lecture when the Chairman asked the audience if there were any questions, one of them asked the lecturer if the politicians in power at the Centre were blind to the written representations, and the articles in the papers on our dependence on the World Bank and the IMF and warnings of the danger ahead? "Blind?" he said. "Not at all." Their eyes are focussed on the Vote Bank. The conditions and contributions of the World Bank are left to the Finance Minister.

◆

NOW about the Vote Bank.

The years since India's independence have witnessed revolutionary changes. There has been great progress in many directions, remarkable achievements in science, industry, transport, communications and other fields.

In the midst of great changes, however, two things have remained unchanged—rural poverty and illiteracy. India remains one of the poorest countries in the world.

Prime Minister after Prime Minister tells the nation that poverty, illiteracy and unemployment are the major problems facing it.

"*Garibi Hatao*" (end poverty) has been the slogan since independence. Yet sixty per cent of the rural population are below the poverty line and more than sixty per cent of them are illiterate. And nearly seventy per cent of India's population live in the villages.

Politics fills the air. It dominates administration, economics, industry, agriculture, education. It affects the daily lives and pursuits of the people. Understandably, politics is the most favoured of all professions, and the only profession that can be entered without qualification and training and it is lucrative. This is not to say that there are not in politics a number of well-educated respectable men and women who have chosen the profession to serve the nation and the people.

The unchanged continuance of rural poverty and illiteracy provides grist to the politicians' mill. The poor, illiterate villagers are the Vote Bank, the big bank of the politicians at election time. The suspicion is growing that politicians have a vested interest in keeping the rural folk poor and illiterate, in order to keep the Voote Bank strong, and themselves in power.

Much praise is heard and read about the innate wisdom of the villager, particularly at meetings addressed by politicians at election time.

The praise is not undeserved. Bred in his bones are centuries of religious tradition and respect for authority. But the offer of ready cash and the promise of better living, coupled with the threat of "Vote for this symbol or else...!" are too much for the poor rural voter to withstand. Added to this are the allurements offered to them at election time. Anyone who has driven slowly past important roadside villages, at election time may not fail to observe well-clothed men under the trees, equipped with cash and supplies of liquor surrounded by groups of local leaders.

Why the growing suspicion? What strengthens it?

Prime Minister Narasimha Rao deserves praise for the bold decision to end the infamous Permit-Control-License Raj. Industry is liberated, trade and commerce are set free. But alas, strangely, inexplicably, agriculture—the nation's biggest basic industry—is still in fetters.

Ceilings are imposed on the extent of land that can be held by a person. Land held in excess of the ceiling is taken away by the government.

No person whose gross annual income exceeds Rs 50,000 is permitted to invest in agricultural land, with the exception of a person who personally cultivates the land.

Financing of agriculture is to be only from nationalised banks and state-controlled lending institutions.

It took nearly two decades for the government to constitute an Advisory Committee in 1990 "to examine the proposal about declaring agriculture as industry", though it is common knowledge that agriculture involves hard productive work and the dictionary defines industry as employment on useful work. The Government followed it up by appointing in 1990 a high-powered Committee on Agricultural Policies and Programmes "to examine the feasibility, desirability of declaring agriculture as industry, and to review the present policies and programmes for the promotion of agricultural development in the country especially with a view to generating export surpluses".

Here are some important findings of the high-powered Committee:

> A total 41.39 million hectares of cultivable waste, and 25.8 million hectares of fallow land should be brought under the plough and even if half our cultivable waste land is reclaimed, that will provide several times more land for redistribution among the landless than what been possible through the application of ceiling laws.
>
> It is self-delduding to expect the redistribution of land would reduce rural poverty to any significant extent. The pattern of distribution so far adopted is in bits and even less than half a hectare each is an exercise in futility.
>
> Our productivity of most crops is lower than the world and Asian averages. Institutional set-up for agriculture development is weak and tuned to subsistence farming.
>
> It is capital starvation of Indian agriculture which is responsible for its slow growth and continuing low productivity.
>
> Funding agriculture by Banks and Financial Institutions like NABARD are governed by artificial and totally unrealistic norms.
>
> Agriculture funding is subjected to archaic procedures and substantial delays, even a small loan takes several months to sanction by which time couple of crops seasons pass by.
>
> A country that has the potential of Number 1 Agro-power in the World has been aiming merely at survial and in achieving this modest goal it has failed as is evident from the fact that during the last 38 years (1950-51 to 1980-81) India has imported foodgrains in an many as 31 years and attained subsistence level of foodgrains consumption in only four years.

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"I hang down my head in shame," said Prime Minister Nehru nearly 40 years ago, "that our nation in which seventy percent of the population engaged in agriculture, should be importing food" and declared: "Not a grain of food shall be imported even if we starve." Yet the nation imports wheat spending millions of dollars of borrowed foreign exchange.

A melancholy finding by a high-powered Committee appointed by the government. The cruel irony of millions of hectares of cultivable agricultural land, the good mother earth, lying wasted, uncultivated, while millions of people in the villages are unemployed, ill-nourished, impoverished.

Indian agriculture is classed into two types or sectors. The cultivation of essential crops like foodgrains, oil seeds, cotton and the cultivation of coffee, tea, rubber, cardamom called plantation crops.

Surprisingly, the high-powered Committee on Agriculture made but a passing reference to the plantation sector.

The picture of agriculture in the first sector—the cultivation of essential crops—has been described by the high powered Committee. In sharp contrast is the picture of agriculture in the plantations where India holds the first rank in the world in the production of tea, third or fourth in coffee as against low rankings in the production of rice, maize, and oilseeds. The picture is of men and women workers earning three to four times more than those cultivating essential crops, workers provided with housing, water supply, sanitation, medical care and other benefits—a striking demonstration of what Indian agriculture can do if only it is unchained, left free to be run as an industry. Industry in which investment is welcomed. Agriculture that exports and earns foreign exchange.

That would be true rural development. It would end the discrimination between cultivation of essential crops and of coffee and tea. It would make the country self-sufficient, if not surplus, in foodgrains, oilseeds and other essential needs, free Central and State budgets from the burden of imports and subsidies of all kinds. It would help to end the economics of scarcity and herald the economics of abundance.

And it would erase the suspicion, now full-grown, that politicians seeking votes are interested in keeping the rural folk poor and illiterate. ■

Budget and New Economic Policy

P.K. BHARGAVA

Budget is an important policy instrument of a government. By incorporating changes in the tax structure and changing expenditure allocations alongwith various policy programmes, the government can give a practical shape to many of its socio-economic objectives and impart vitality to the national economy. The health of our national economy started deteriorating from the early eighties but it was in a precarious condition when the new government of P.V. Narasimha Rao took over the reins of the administration in June 1991. There was the problem of increasing fiscal deficit, deteriorating balance of payments and rising prices. The situation was so alarming that our foreign exchange reserves touched a low level of Rs 2382 crores in June 1991—just sufficient to meet the country's import bill for two weeks—and by August 1991 the annual inflation rate had touched a peak of 17 per cent. India had lost its credibility in the international market and the internal economic situation was worsening. Under such a situation remedial measures were urgently called for to revitalise the economy.

The agenda for economic reforms of the new government started with the Union Budget for 1991-92 and it has been further reinforced by the two successive Budgets for 1992-93 and 1993-94. There has been a systematic effort to contain the fiscal deficit, improve the balance of payments position and bring down the inflation rate through various policy measures.

The process of stabilisation and strucutral adjustment started in July 1991 with the devaluation of the rupee by nearly 20 per cent, a liberalised trade policy to boose exports, linking of imports to exports through the system of EXIM scrips, relaxation in FERA to boost foreign investment and incentives to the NRIs to attract foreign exchange remittances from them so as to imrpove India's balance of payments position and its image in the international market. Alongwith these steps the government also adopted certain measures such as redefining the role of the public sector enterprises, relaxation in industrial licensing through deregulation, delicensing and simplified procedures so as to help improve the industrial economy of India. To bring about fiscal discipline in the economy, the government attempted to mobilise resources through masaive tax effort, unearthing of black money, cut in subsidies, disinvestment of equities of public sector undertakings and reduced market borrowings. All these policy measures and changes introduced in the economy constituted the elements of 'New Economic Policy'. The Union Budget for 1992-93 further accelerated the process by essentially opening the economy from a control-bound, inward-looking economy into a market-friendly, outward-looking economy through the partial convertibility of the rupee, substantial reduction in import duties, near abolition of import licensing, liberalised import of gold, permission to foreign investors to buy shares in the Indian stock market and further relaxation in the FERA.

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THE aforesaid measures of the New Economic Policy apparently seem to have a healthy impact on the Indian economy as the Union Finance Minister in his Budget speech for 1993-94 observed: "We have restored a measure of normalcy to our external payments. The annual rate of inflation has been reduced from the peak of 17 per cent in August 1991 to below 7 per cent." He further observed: "We have made good progress by reducing the fiscal deficit from 8.4 per cent of GDP in 1990-91 to about five per cent in the current year." It is in this background that the Union Budget for 1993-94 was presented by the Union Finance Minister with the clear emphasis on fiscal correction to ensure that inflationary expectations are effectively curbed, to give a strong fillip to development expenditure for rural development and social services such as education and health, to move towards a simpler tax system with moderate rates for better compliance and growth in exports to manage our balance of payments without the need for

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continued exceptional financing from abroad. While these are welcome expectations of the Union Finance Minister, it is to be seen whether a favourable climate and conditions exist for their fulfillment.

In his Budget speech for 1993-94, the Union Finance Minister rightly noted: "The rising fiscal deficits of the Central Government were the root cause of our balance of payments problem, rising prices and high rates of interest." Obviously it follows that if fiscal deficits could be tailored, problems of balance of payments and rising prices could be controlled. The available data indicate that the Central Government has been able to contain its fiscal deficit to the desired level of five per cent of the GDP by the end of March 1993 as compared to 8.4 per cent in 1990-91. If one also looks at the quantum of the budgetary deficit for the last three years, it is amply clear that the deficit which stood at Rs 11,347 crores in 1990-91 declined to Rs 6855 crores in 1991-92 but was slightly higher at Rs 7202 crores in 1992-93 (revised). The Budget deficit for 1993-94 is estimated still at a lower level of Rs 4314 crores. This could be said to be a happy development on the fiscal front. However, if one examines the deficit on revenue account it would be noticeable that the government has not been able to reduce its revenue deficit and it continues to be substantially large.

The deficit on revenue account in 1990-91 stood at Rs 18,562 crores. It was as high as Rs 16,261 crores in 1991-92, Rs 16,700 crores in 1992-93 (revised) and Rs 17,630 crores in 1993-94 (Budget). It only means that the budgetary deficit could be smaller by using the surpluses on capital account to meet the deficit on revenue account. It also means that we are eating away our capital to meet our day-to-day requirements. How long can this process continue is anybody's guess but the situation is definitely dangerous to the health of the economy. Real success can be achieved only when we shall be in a position to contain the deficit on revenue account either by reducing the expenditure or by raising receipts on revenue account. This calls for a strong fiscal discipline on the part of both the Central and the State Governments.

The situation on the price front is certainly much better than what it was in August 1991. The price rise during 1992-93 has been of the order of 9.9 per cent as against over 13 per cent in the year 1991-92. The Budget for 1993-94 should further help to consolidate the situation on the price front as the Budget does not contain proposals for any fresh levies. On the contrary, the relief in customs and excise duties would cost a revenue loss of Rs 4522 crores to the government. However, in this context one must take into account the pre-Budget hike in the administered prices of rice, wheat, sugar, petroleum products, steel and steel products, and coal. On top of this, the impact of an all-round rise in railway fares and freight ought to be taken into account while considering the price situation in the days ahead.

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A welcome feature of the Union Budget for 1993-94 is that it stipulates higher expenditure on social services (such as education and health) and rural development. However, in this context one must consider the Plan transfers to the States and the Union Teritorries. It may be noted that Central transfers, excluding the statutory transfers, to the States and to the Union Territories at Rs 16,898 crores in 1993-94 (Budget) are estimated to be Rs 1017 crores less than that of Rs 17,915 crores in 1992-93 (revised). These are amounts of gross transfers but the fact is that the Centre gets back a part of what it lends by way of repayment of part of the principal and payment of interest on outstanding loan by the States. After the total recoveries of Rs 11,131 crores in 1992-93 and Rs 13,873 crores in 1993-94 (an increase of Rs 2742 crores) the net quantum of Plan transfers from the Centre to the States and the Union Territories goes down from Rs 6784 crores in 1992-93 to Rs 3025 crores in 1993-94. The Centre has thus been harsh to the States which in fact are responsible for providing social services like education. Can it then be claimed that the outlay on education, health and rural development has increased, when the net Plan allocation to the States has been reduced by more than 55 per cent? It is only in respect of Central or Centrally sponsored schemes that the outlay of rural development, agriculture, education and health has incareased. Inefficiency and leakages are bound to exist in Central funding and intervention in areas what are supposed to be the responsibility of the local authorities.

As a solution to our balance of payments problem, the Union Finance Minister has proposed a quantum jump in our exports and also announced additional measures to attract direct foreign investment. As most of our exports are import-intensive, the Union Finance Minister has provided substantial relief by lowering import duties in a variety of areas so as to strengthen the competitive capacity of the Indian industry. However, it is doubtful whether the Indian industry will be able to take full advantage of the lowered import duties in view of the full convertibility of the rupee on current account. The dollar has tended to be relatively expensive in open market as compared to the offical prescribed rupee dollar exchange rate which existed earlier. This would make the imports costlier and in consequence the import-based exports. In addition, there is a global recession at present and though the developed countries advocate 'globalisation' of trade in principle and suggest the developing countries to lower import duties but in their own case they prefer to practise a regime of protectionism.

India's exports do not seem to witness a rapid growth in the near future, for exports during April to December 1992 grew at a dismal rate of only 3.4 per cent over the corresponding period of 1991 as against the stipulated target of 16 per cent. Further, the deficit in the current account of the balance of payments which stood at $ 2.8 billion in 1991-92 is placed at $ 7 billion for 1992-93 as per the *Economic Survey* of the Ministry of Finance. The situation is sure the worsen once the crude oil prices shoot up, as is feared. If one also takes into consideration the huge external debt of $ 88 billion with debt servicing charges of around 30 per cent at present, one is bound to conclude that there will constantly be a pressure on our balance of payments due to the increasing foreign exchange requirements to meet the growing repayment and servicing obligations of the external debt.

The future is quite challenging and the prevailing situation calls for bold steps to be undertaken by the government. It is high time that every effort is made to contain the expenditure of the government and practise economy wherever possible. At the same time, all steps must be taken to augment the revenue resources of both the Centre and the States. There is also an urgent need to reorient our public debt policy whereby the public debt becomes not only self-financing but helps to generate additional resources. Our public sector enterprises must also improve their performance and generate the expected surpluses. In brief, a strict fiscal discipline ought to be evolved and observed at the national level. ■

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Life and Times of the Chakmas

Survival, Human Rights and Self-Determination

AUROBINDO GHOSE and SYED IFTIKHAR GILLANI

The following paper was presented on behalf of the Peoples' Rights Organisation (PRO), a human rights body, by Dr Aurobindo Ghose, General Secretary, PRO, and Syed Iftikhar Gillani, Secretary, PRO, to the World Chakma Conference in the International Year for the World's Indigenous People on the theme of "The Chakmas in a New Partnership" at Calcutta on April 12-15, 1993. —Editor

The Chakmas are an ancient tribal community, Buddhist by religion, having their own distinct way of life, language, values and culture, who have made the area known as the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) their homeland since the eleventh century AD after migrating from the Arakan hills of Burma. The Chakmas are known the world over for their shifting or swidden or slash-and-burn method of cultivation known as *jhum* appropriate to agricultural activity on the hilly slopes. Though the plains Chittagong Bengalis refer to the Chakmas and 11 other tribal communities inhabiting the CHT collectively as the *Jumma* people (from *jhum*), the fact remains that the Chakma people constitute a 'nationality' in the classical sense of the term or even an 'indigenous population or people' going by the contemporary concept adopted by the United Nations and the International Labour Organisation. Besides the CHT area of Bangladesh and the Arakan region of Myanmar or Burma, by migration over different periods, the Chakmas have settled in Assam, Tripura and Mizoram of present-day India's North-Easten region and acquired Indian citizenship. The Chakmas are also listed as Scheduled Tribes in these States of India. The Chakmas are also living in Arunachal Pradesh but here they are yet to acquire the status either of 'refugees' or of 'citizens' and remain in a condition of statelessness.

The Chakmas began to form into a coherent people from about the sixteenth century onwards. Their peacful and self-contained subsistence-level tribal existence unfettered by external influence or domination where the struggle was once waged against Nature in order to eke out a living, was first disturbed with the advent of the East India Company in 1772. It is a tribute to the spirit of freedom and resistance of the Chakmas and their resilience that it took the British fifteen long years and six bloody battles before they could annex the CHT as a tributary state in 1787. Since then the Chakmas have had to struggle both against Nature and the outside man in order to survive with freedom and human dignity.

Looking back over the last more than two centuries since the CHT was ceded as a tributary state of British India, the history of the Chakma people has been one of a very long and continuous period of political subjugation under three successive foreign rulers, each perhaps more unsympathetic, oppressive, hegemonic and brutal than the previous one. The British ruled the CHT as a part of India from 1787 to 1947, as an autonomous area exclusively for the tribal people. In 1900, the British promulgated the CHT Regulations, which while being strictly colonial in nature and also maintaining the *status quo* of entrusting the three tribal Chiefs or 'Rajas' with the internal administration and management of their respective "circles", significantly prohibited the settlement of outsiders in the district and the transfer of land, thus leading to alienation of land of the CHT peoples. The British policy of recognising and preserving some of the tribal rights and tribal social structure while denying the people at large their democratic right to elect their government and to manage their own affairs politically, was further underlined with the Government of India Act of 1935 which designated the CHT as a "Totally Excluded Area", thereby giving its inhabitants no representation in the Bengal Legislature and no opportunity of expressing their views on any of the issues connected with the partition of Bengal. The British totally bypassed the views and sentiments of the Chakma and other indigenous tribal peoples of the CHT and in violation of the very principle of partition as well as the principles of natural justice, awarded on August 17, 1947, after the Indian flag had been hoisted in Rangamati on August 15, the CHT which was a predominantly non-Muslim area to Pakistan. This was the unkindest cut, as future events would clearly show, as far as the Chakma and other tribal peoples of the CHT are concerned.

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IF the partition destroyed the faith of the Chakma people in both the British as well as the leaders of the Indian national movement to provide a just and fair political solution and protect their special position, successive Pakistani and Bangladeshi regimes have so shattered the lives and the psyche of the Chakma and other indigenous peoples of the CHT and driven them to the edge of existence in every sense, that the last quarter of this century has witnessed a national awakening, a rapid development of their sense of unity and their collective will and ability to resist and the slow, gradual but sure emergence of a determined movement for self-determination, in the face of repression that has reached genocidal proportions. In this scenario India has been both a home for the Chakma people who have settled in the North-Eastern region in the course of time as well as a haven for those who have been forced to cross the border, post-partition. Though in absolute terms the situation of the Chakma people in India in terms of their economic well-being, social development and political participation has much to be desired, the Indian experience, with the notable exception of the conditions in the State of Arunachal Pradesh, with regard to survival, human rights and the special rights of the indigenous and tribal peoples, has been an example of sheer, unbelievable contrast when compared to the situation across the border.

From the annexation of the CHT as a tributary state by the British in 1787, to the CHT Regulation of 1900 providing limited autonomy and a measure of protection to the rights of the indigenous and tribal peoples, to 1947 when the CHT was included in Pakistan against the wishes of its people, to massive displacement in the name of development of the US-financed Kaptai hydro-electric project in 1960, to the cessation of the special status of the CHT in 1963 by amendment of the Pakistani Constitution and its reiteration in the Constitution of Bangladesh in 1972, to the policy of settlement of outsiders in the CHT and dispossession of the land of the tribal peoples, to the option of the Bangladeshi regime for a military and *not* a political solution to the CHT problem, to the planned organisation of successive *carnages*, the latest being the Logang massacre leading to recurrent migration to India followed by re-patriation and re-migration back to India, the refusal of refugee status to the Chakma and other migrants and the intolerable conditions of their existence in the refugee camps in Tripura and, finally, the adoption of the resolution to deport the Chakmas from Arunachal Pradesh passed in December 1992—this is the saga of the Chakma people in their march to achieve self-determination to lead a life of peace, plenty, freedom, dignity and identity.

For the attainment of the above goals of a higher human order, the Peoples' Rights Organisation (PRO) expresses its solidarity with the Chakma people in their ongoing struggle and makes the following recommendations, demands and suggestions to the concerned governments, organisations and bodies.

The PRO *recommends* to the Government of Bangladesh:

i) To recognise that the CHT problem is essentially a political problem requiring a political (and *not* a military or law-and-order) solution.
ii) To withdraw all military and para-military forces from the area.
iii) To grant autonomy for the CHT *at least* in line with the CHT Regulation of 1900 and to recognise the hill peoples' right to self-determination, that is, the right of a people to determine their own future. By virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.
iv) To shift the outside settlers in the CHT to the plains and to restore the vacated homesteads and lands to their original tribal owners. In the short run, to stop any further settlement of outsiders in the CHT.
v) To guarantee the right to life, livelihood, property and personal liberty to the indigenous peoples. To dismantle the "cluster villages" or concentration camps immediately. To provide proper rehabilitation and adequate compensation for the loss of life and property.
vi) To stop forthwith all violations of human rights. To release all tribal prisoners. To end their torture.
vii) To desist from using foreign aid and development projects to the detriment of the peoples of the CHT.

The PRO *demands* of the Government of India:

i) To provide "refugee status" in accordance with international law to the 70,000 and more Chakma and other tribal refugees living in inhuman conditions in refugee camps in Tripura and elsewhere. To provide to all these refugees the basic needs of food, shelter, medical care and education, if necessary with the assistance of international organisations.

ii) *Not* to repartriate these refugees to Bangladesh until the minimum conditions for their rehabilitation, resettlement and security of life and property in Bangladesh are satisfied. In fact, the refugees are unlikely to move out of their camps unless these minimum conditions are satisfied, as recent experience at Agartala (Tripura) has so clearly borne out.

iii) *Not* to permit the Government of Arunachal Pradesh to deport the Chakma and Hajong people living in Arunachal region for the last 28 years.

iv) To immediately grant citizenship of India to all the 66,000 Chakma and Hajong peoples of Arunachal Pradesh and provide them with the basic amenities and opportunities of life. After the anouncement of the GOI's decision to grant citizenship to these Chakmas and Hajongs of Arunachal Pradesh on the floor of Parliament on April 29, 1993, it is now a matter of speedy implementation of this decision.

v) In general, to strengthen and improve the condition of the tribal and indigenous peoples residing in India, including the Chakma people.

The PRO *appeals* to the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees):

i) To assist the Government of India in its efforts to properly rehabilitate the Chakma refugees.

ii) To take all steps to ensure that these refugees are *not* repatriated unless the above conditions are satisfied

iii) To repatriate them once the conditions are satisfied under the supervision of the International Red Cross. ■

Indian Gays Too Have Human Rights

VIMAL BALASUBRAHMANYAN

Ever since Bill Clinton announced his election promise of lifting the ban on homsexuals in the US military, Indian newspapers have devoted a fair amount of column-inches to the question of gay rights in America. But the fact is that gay rights are an issue in this country too.

On April 18 this year, the *Indian Express* ran a report on how officials and cops of Chandrapur town in Maharashtra prevented a young lesbian couple from getting legally married. Earlier in 1987, there was heavy media focus on how two policewomen stationed near Bhopal had got married in a temple (with their parents' consent) and were subsequently sacked from their jobs. A couple of years ago, a Delhi journalist's book based on interviews with male homosexuals was widely reviewed by the press. Off and on there have been feature articles in magazines and newspapers: sometimes sensitive, sometimes sensational, on the prevalence of gay and lesbian relationships in India. And, as I write this, I note a review in the *Sunday Observer* (May 9) of a collection of writings on gay and lesbian relationships among Indians abroad (*A Lotus of Another Colour*, edited by Rakesh Ratti).

However, media coverage on homosexuality has not led to any movement demanding protection of the human rights of gays and lesbians. By and large, public attitude swings between indifference and prejudice. Either it is believed that homosexuality is a very limited phenomenon in India; or that it is a 'perversion' requiring psychiatric help; or that it is one more example of upper-class Westernised decadence.

In the context of the human rights conference in Vienna last month, this neglected aspect of the human rights of homosexuals (in India, not just in the US) deserves attention. And a good source of information on this issue is the 'Citizen Report on the Status of Homosexuality in India', published by the AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA) entitled *Less than Gay* (1991).

The ABVA is a Delhi-based group which campaigned on behalf of women harassed in Delhi's red-light area and stalled the draconian 1989 AIDS Bill. In the course of its work the group felt it necessary to collect information on homosexuality since this section of people are particularly vulnerable victims of an authoritarian drive against the AIDS.

However, it is not just in the context of AIDS that the rights of homosexuals has to be seen, but also in a much wider, more urgent human background.

One of the objectives of the ABVA Report is to demolish myths about the prevalence of homosexuality in India, and what sort of people homosexuals are. It contains 21 sensitive personal life-sketches as told to the ABVA activists or culled from gay magazines. There appear to be at least four gay magazines in this country and five gay groups based in various small and big towns.

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THE 93-page booklet gives a comprehensive description of gay life in India, the legal and medical issues invovled, and ends with a charter of demands. These include:

—Repeal of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code and the relevant sections of the Army, Navy and Air Force Acts of 1950.

—Civil rights legislation to offer gay citizens and other sexual minorities like the *hijras* the same protection now guaranteed on the basis of creed and caste.

—Recognition of the right to privacy as a vital part of the fundamental right to life and liberty, and to include under this a person's right to his or her sexual orientation.

—Reform in police policy to stop harassment of gays and lesbians.

—Amendment of the Special Marriage Act to allow for marriage between people of the same sex, with all the consequent legal benefits of marriage. Alternatively, legal recognition of friendship agreements between single people of the same sex as a valid way of organising family life.

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The ABVA Report also calls for Press Council guidelines to ensure sensitive reporting on gay issues. Apart from legal measures, what is needed is a change in moral attitudes. For example, the follow-up report on the Chandrapur girls (*Indian Express*, April 19), though relatively objective, even sympathetic, had the unnecessarily titillating heading, "The bold, the beautiful and the damned". The ABVA's list of demands includes a call for a change in the homosexual bias in education by presenting positive images of homosexuality as a viable, alternative life-style.

What I found most interesting in the report is its revelation on how little consciousness and concern there is on this issue even among progressive groups. The ABVA's members state that they themselves went through a long educational process while preparing the report. "This was an area where many of us were ill-informed and even prejudiced to begin with."

The group had written to 80-odd prominent people and organisations working for various causes, requesting discussions to help develop a perspective on homosexuality in India. The majority of those contacted either didn't think the subject was worthy of attention, or had no time, or were too busy with more "revolutionary" commitments. Only a very few felt concerned enough to respond.

Commenting on this blind spot among progressives the ABVA points out that even the Amnesty International took a long time to recognise the validity of the issue. It was only in 1987 that Amnesty took a stand when it brought out a report on homosexuality and only in 1991 that it decided to extend the notion of 'prisoners of conscience' to people imprisoned for homosexuality.

Interestingly, women's groups in India have yet to examine this issue in depth. As far as I know, even reinstatement of the dismissed policewomen was not taken up as a major cause by the women's movement. The ABVA's comment is, therefore, worth emphasising here:

> The fact that many gay men and lesbians feel obliged to conceal their sexual orientation makes it difficult to assert their civil, political and cultural rights, as individuals and as members of a sexual minority...the question of the human rights of gay men and lesbians is not whether or not people approve of homosexuality or the concept of gay identities. Rather it is a question of equality under the law and under human rights covenants, like the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which India is a signatory. ■

Terrorism in Uttar Pradesh

RAMESH CHANDRA

Sikh terrorism has entered a new phase in Uttar Pradesh, manifesting a quantitative as well as qualitative increase in the level of violence. Having taken a toll of 261 lives in 1991, it has emerged as a major form of organised crime.

A comparison of the area and population affected by terrorism in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh further confirms the magnitude of the problem. The total population of Punjab is 1.65 crores (1981 census) and the total area is 50,328 square kilometres approximately. The number of police stations affected in Punjab is reported to be 44.

Six districts of Uttar Pradesh namely, Pilibhit, Nainital, Kheri, Rampur, Shahjehanpur and Bijnor are fully affected by terrorism. Eight districts—Dehradun, Hardwar, Bareilly, Muzaffarnagar, Ghaziabad, Moradabad, Kanpur and Lucknow—are substantially affected. Another eight districts which are partially affected are Saharanpur, Meerut, Pauri Garhwal, Aligarh, Bahraich, Mahrajganj, Faizabad and Unnao. If we take into account hundred per cent of the population and the area of the fully affected districts, 50 per cent of the substantially affected districts and 25 per cent of the partially affected districts, the total population affected by terrorism comes to about 1,94,43,000 and the affected area comes to about 50,215 square kilometres. The number of police stations affected in UP is 85 at present. If adequate counter measures are not taken in time, the problem might assume unmanageable proportions.

Impact of Punjab Situation

It has been observed that the situation in Punjab has a considerable impact on the law and order situation in UP. Whenever action is intensified against the terrorists in Punjab, a large number of terrorists enter UP and there is considerable rise in the level of violence. The pattern of crime is almost the same as in Punjab. Since the induction of the Army in Punjab in November 1991, a large number of terrorists entered UP and the maximum number of terrorist-related incidents was recorded in the State in the month of December 1991. The number of casualties also touched an all-time high figure (62) in December 1991. When anti-terrorist action was intensified in Punjab in February 1992 on the eve of general elections, a rise in terrorist activity in UP was discernible from March to May.

Sensitivity of Nepal Border

UP has an international border with Nepal, extending to about 793 kilometres. The entire border is negotiable except about 200 kilometres in district Pithoragarh, where the Kali river forms a natural boundary. Although UP-Nepal border is dotted with Foreigners' Checkposts, there is no restriction on the nationals of either country crossing the border. Reports have been trickling in about the movement of Sikh terrorists across the border. Some pockets have also been created by the terrorists close to the Nepal border. A notorious terrorist Raju Khanna of the Khalistan National Army was arrested in September 1991 while entering UP through the Sonauli checkpost in Maharajganj district. He was a prize catch for the UP police. His interrogation by expert sleuths of UP police as well as the CBI and the Intelligence Bureau, had revealed that the terrorists were regularly visiting Kathmandu, from where it was easier to get passports and visas for other countries. Some travel agents were instrumental in facilitating smooth passage via Nepal.

There are reliable intelligence reports about the plans of terrorists to smuggle weapons into India through the Nepal border. Due to strict vigilance at the Punjab-Pakistan border, the terrorists had been using the Rajasthan border and Gujarat border for the smuggling of weapons. They have also tried the Jammu border. But the absence of policing at the Indo-Nepal border has attracted the attention of smugglers. Delivery of weapons in Nepalese territory has reportedly been promised by the ISI, Pakistan and it is the responsibility of the Sikh terrorists to collect the weapons and smuggle them into Indian territory.

Communal Divide

The Sikh terrorists had instructions to spread communal divide—Sikh versus Hindu as well as Hindu versus Muslim feeling in India but their efforts did not meet with success in Punjab. The main reason being the minuscule number of

Muslims and almost equal distribution of Sikh and Hindu population. Their nefarious design, however, met with partial success in the Terai belt of UP. The terrorists first propagated a so-called reformist movement amongst the Sikhs and tried to impress upon them that the Sikhs were a separate community and had a separate culture and religion. They enforced a certain code of conduct which prohibited consumption of meat, alcohol and other intoxicants, married Sikh ladies were prohibited from using *sindoor* and cosmetics. Sikh educational institutions were forced to enforce a certain type of uniform which includes black turban for boys and black *patta* for girls.

The recent trend in terrorist crime has indicated that only Hindus were made targets of violence. This strategy has been adopted to invite the ire of Hindus against the local Sikhs which would automatically trigger off a chain reaction. Hindu congregations have been made special targets. The massacre of 44 Hindus at Rudrapur district of Nainital on the occasion of Ramlila in October 1991 was a deliberate attempt to create Hindu-Sikh riots. The prompt action taken by the administration and the government saved the situation. The Ardh-Kumbha Mela at Hardwar was celebrated in 1992 under the shadow of terrorist threat. Strict vigilance by the police and intelligence machinery nullified the design of the terrorists. But the massacre of 11 bus passengers on April 27, 1992 near village Bhatedi, PS Jwalapur in district Hardwar just after the conclusion of the Mela confirmed the intentions of the terrorists.

Kidnapping for ransom has shown a rising trend in the recent past. It is significant that the victims are only well-to-do Hindus.

The terrorists have not only committed mass murders of Hindus but in order to impress their Pakistani (ISI) masters, they have demonstrably shown favours to Muslims. On a number of occasions when both Hindus and Muslims were captured by the terrorists, the lives of Muslims were spared with a declaration that Muslims were their allies and hence they would not be harmed. In a bizarre mass murder which was committed by the terrorists in district Rampur on November 16, 1991, nine persons including six roadways employees were done to death. One of the roadways employees was asked to go away, when he produced his identity card which disclosed that he was a Muslim. Paradoxically, another Muslim employee had been killed at the same spot by the gang because he had mentioned his name which sounded like a Hindu and he was not intelligent enough to produce his identity card on time.

A significant development in recent times has been the participation of Muslims in Sikh congregations. On a few occasions, even *'Deivans'* have been attended by some Muslim leaders in Gurudwaras. Some Muslim political workers have been noticed taking keen interest in Sikh activities. Developments in district Rampur are particularly worthy of attention. An ex-Minister (Muslim) is a permanent invitee at all meetings and congregations where Sikh-Muslim brotherhood is sought to be promoted or so-called Hindu domination is to be denigrated. Such developments have caused some ill-will between the local Sikhs and Hindus.

The Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute is a major communal issue between the Hindus and Muslims. The Sikh terrorists and their clandestine supporters have tried to make it a three-dimensional problem by declaring their support in favour of the Muslims. The much publicised visit of Simranjeet Singh Mann to Ayodhya in 1991 was a step in this direction. This issue has, however, not won the sympathy of Sikhs in general. In spite of vigorous clandestine propaganda at the instance of the ISI of Pakistan to muster support of the Sikhs in favour of the Babri Masjid, the Sikhs in general have either refrained from taking sides, or have openly supported the stand of the Hindus. The arrest of Simranjit Singh Mann on October 10, 1991 at the UP-Delhi border did not cause even a ripple among the Sikhs of UP.

Pro-Pakistan Nucleus

UP has a sizeable Muslim population. The communal situation in this State has always been sensitive. Doubts were expressed in the past about Pakistan spy rings working in India, particularly in the Muslim dominated areas of UP. Such doubts were dismissed as bogeys raised by Hindu communal elements. But recently intelligence agencies have discovered a formidable spy ring of the ISI which has been active in Aligarh. The arrest of a Kashmiri Muslim, Javed Yusuf, in Aligarh in early 1992 gave some valuable clues about the spy ring. It came to light that professional spies of the ISI were regularly visiting Aligarh.

The arrest of three Pakistani army officers. attached to the ISI, near the Punjab-Pakistan border by the BSF further corroborated the presence of a spy ring in Aligarh. A number of names have been disclosed by the Pakistani officers who were helpful to the spy ring.

The arrest of Manjit Singh, a noted Sikh terrorist who used to operate from foreign territories, by the Maharashtra Police and his interrogation by the police agencies has conclusively proved the close link between the Sikh militants, Kashmiri militants and Pakistani agents operating from Indian soil, particularly Aligarh.

Infiltration of Bharatiya Kisan Union

Subtle efforts are being made by the Sikh terrorists to influence the Bharatiya Kisan Union to utilise its hold on the UP Kisans for creating a law and order problem. Secret instructions were sent to all Sikh pockets to join the BKU in large numbers and to raise hue and cry about the so-called atrocities being committed by the government on the Sikh farmers. Efforts were made to use the BKU platform for organising the Kisans against the government.

The BKU supremo, Mahendra Singh Tikait, has so far parried the overtures of the supporters of terrorists but at the same time some utterances of the BKU leaders have come to light which hinted that if the government did not accept the demands of the kisans, they might take to terrorism. It is well known that in Punjab the terrorists had been encouraging the kisans to stop paying land revenue, irrigation charges, electricity charges, etc. They were also advised to form Khalsa Panchayats and decide the village disputes in these panchayats only. The BKU in UP has also been contemplating on similar lines. It suits the interest of the terrorists if the kisans have a showdown with the government. Any strong action by the government would be projected as an atrocity and the kisans would be further alienated from the government.

Secret feelers have been sent by the Sikh terrorists to forge unity with the BKU on ethnic lines since the Sikh terrorists are by and large Jats and the farmers of western UP are also mostly Jats. If they support each other's cause, the government, which is dominated by other castes, can be brought down. This line of thinking has not caught up so far but strict vigilance by intelligence agencies as well as saner elements of the society is required.

Support to Land-grabbers

A special feature of terrorism in UP is that it has extended support to the Sikh land-grabbers in the Terai belt. Land management in the Terai areas is a grossly mismanaged affair. Some Sikh refugees were granted small pieces of land in Nainital district in the early fifties. They increased their area of landholding by various means, both legal and illegal. Apart from the genuine refugees, a large number of Sikhs settled down in the Terai area because land was cheap and the revenue department was too willing to turn a Nelson's eye to the trespassing on government land. The net result was that not only district Nainital but a large part of district Rampur, Pilibhit and Lakhimpur Kheri are under the control of Sikh farmholders.

The Forest Department also provided attractive openings for the migrant Sikh farmers. These farmers purposely purchased or grabbed some cultivable land near the reserved forests and kept on nibbling at the forest area by felling of trees illegally. Gradually, all contracts of forest plantation, felling trees, etc. passed into the hands of the Sikhs.

After the introduction of Consolidation of Holdings Act and Land Ceiling Act the big Sikh farmers were apprehensive that they would be dispossessed of their surplus land. The terrorists appear to have stepped in and created an impression that they can afford protection to the Sikh farmers against any attempt of the UP Government to take away their surplus land. The kidnapping of a sub-divisional magistrate in district Rampur on September 26, 1991 was a pointer in this direction. The Magistrate had gone village Hazratpur, PS Bilaspur to take possession of land belonging to an influential Sikh farmer, which had already been declared surplus by a competent court. This incident caused a consternation in the Revenue Department for a few days

The Council of Ministers was reported to have taken a decision to enforce the Land Ceiling Act and Consolidation of Holdings Act. Some statements of the former Revenue Minister also came to light, wherein he declared that the land-grabbers would be dispossessed of the land illegally occupied by them. But the malady is so deep and the involvement of Revenue Department so extensive that the administrative machinery was dragging its feet and probably awaiting a change of government.

The aforementioned features of the terrorist problem are not common in other States or at least not discernible so far. The problem needs expert and effective handling; otherwise, not only that the peace of the Terai would be lost forever but the Gangetic plain would also be in turmoil. ■

Simpler the Better

The news rooms of our radio and television organisations seem to have a dictionary of their own, which endows words with meanings that they do not always possess.

The first rule in newspapers and the electronic media is that the language used should be common currency. If learned words are employed at all in a newspaper, that might be done on the editorial page and in expert articles which are read by only a fraction of the subscribers. And since there is no editorial page on radio and television, difficult and arcane words should not be used at all by them.

Especially in Hindi and the mother-tongues. A generation ago there used to be an outcry against Raghu Vira-isms. But that indefatigable lexicographical fabricator (the polysyllabic equivalent of wordsmith) seems to be alive and thriving after his physical death. He has daily revenge on advocates of a diet of plain words.

Just the other day, television, reporting the goings on in the Jharkhand area, said that movement of vehicles had become *avaruddh*. And do you know what that word stands for? Nothing other than *bandh*.

We were also told that the United Nations had decided to enforce the *nishkasan* of Yugoslavia, as that erstwhile member of UN had ceased to exist as a country.

Nishkasan, although it rhymes with Kamalhasan, the actor with a rubber face, has nothing to do with fun and games. It just means removal. To the pompous bulletin-producers *nikaalna* was obviously too plebian.

Let them get this straight once more—people are not two-legged dictionaries; they don't move about with thesauruses in their pockets. The rule should be: if there is a choice between a simple word and a difficult one, choose the simple.

H.Y.S.

MADHU LIMAYE : Thakur Case

(Continued from page 3)

no mention either of the Chairman of the JPC being invited to express his opinion on the matter—with which he was intimately connected!

A more perfunctory job cannot be imagined. There were experienced Opposition members on the Privileges panel. The question arises as to what these members were doing. In the absence of information about their attendance or non-attendance, it would not be fair to comment on their attitude. But it can be said that they were not vigilant enough. The whole exercise, I am sorry to say, gives the impression of slipshod work, if not a whitewash job. K.R. Narayanan is the Vice-President and Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. True, he has duties to perform as 'the Vice-President. Even so he ought to take his second job more seriously. For his information (and for that of the members of the Privileges Committee) I wish to place the following excerpt from the latest edition of *May's Parliamentary Practice* before him which will help him to understand what the privilege was and how it was breached:

> Conduct not amounting to a direct attempt improperly to influence members in the discharge of their duties but having a tendency to impair their independence in the future performance of their duty may be treated as a contempt. An example of such a case is the Speaker's ruling that a letter sent by a parliamentary agent to a member informing him that the promoters of a private bill would agree to certain amendments provided that he and other members refrained from further opposition to the bill constituted (under the procedure then in force) a *prima facie* breach of privilege.
>
> Influence by private solicitation in certain circumstances has also been found objectionable. The Lords have resolved that the private solicitation of members on matters of claims to honours or other judicial proceedings was a breach of privilege. Upon the same principle, *it would be a breach of privilege when members are acting in a judicial or quasi-judicial capacity*, e.g. when serving on committees on private bills, *to attempt, by letters, anonymous or other, to influence them in the discharge of their duties. (May's Parliamentary Practice,* ed. Chifford Boulton, Clerk of the House of Commons, London, 1989, Twentyfirst edition, p.129) ■

Aping the Adversary

A few points of the brilliant article entitled "Aping the Adversary" by Nikhil Chakravartty (*Mainstream*, April 24, 1993, p.3) are either not correct or require elaboration.

a) Regarding the demand for Pakistan made by the Muslim League in 1940, it has been stated that other parties in India rejected the demand. But the fact remains that the undivided Communist Party of India supported the resolution in the name of right of self-determination. According to its thesis, produced at that time, India is a multinational country. If certain regions inhabited by people predominantly Muslim desire to have a separate independent state, it cannot be and should not be opposed on principle. Of course, the CPI did not support the riots that resulted as a consequence of the rabid communal agitation for the creation of Pakistan preached by the leaders of the Muslim League; rather, the party opposed the communal frenzy and tried to prevent the same. But it cannot be denied that the CPI gave moral support to the Lahore Resolution of the Muslim League for the creation of Pakistan and division of India.

The above support of the CPI played an important role in bringing a large section of the Muslim student community (who had earlier considered the division of India as repulsive) within the fold of the Muslim League and the Lahore Resolution.

Will N.C. enlighten us whether the undivided CPI or the present CPI and CPI-M had subsequently announced that the above support was wrong?

b) There is no denying the fact that most of the Muslims in India have a soft corner for Pakistan just as almost every Hindu of Pakistan and Bangladesh has a similar soft corner for India. We know that this is due to historical reasons. Additionally, both Pakistan and Bangladesh are Muslim states. These, as has been stated by N.C., are the root causes of the above psychology of the two communities.

To remove the above psychological abberration, both Pakistan and Bangladesh should declare themselves as secular states. In India, secular and progressive forces should counteract the philosophy of the *Sangh Parivar* with determination. It is a Herculean task for the progressive forces of all these countries.

c) Regarding Muslim personal law on the maximum number of wives that a Mussalman can have, the *Sangh Parivar* has no right to raise the bogey against it. N.C. has brought out the reason. Whatever may be in the Hindu or Muslim scriptures, very few people of both the communities have more than one wife. But at the fag end of the twentieth century when womenfolk must have rights and responsibilities equal to those of menfolk, the aforementioned Muslim law is a dishonour to Muslim womanhood and an adequate reform is needed. Only the progressive forces of the Muslim community are capable of bringing about the reform. Raja Rammohan Roy and Iswarchandra Vidyasagar had done yeomen service to the Hindu community by their attempts to introduce various reforms. In this sphere too the path of the Muslim progressive forces is not strewn with roses.

Perhaps according to N.C. I am also aping the adversary. But it cannot be helped.

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ASHOK MITRA: Betrayal of a Visionary

(Continued from page 4)

Mahalanobis, arguing in his own manner, was concerned with post-independence Indian social reality.

There was still an afterglow of the pride that was the hallmark of the freedom movement. We must, this pride said, haul ourselves up by our own bootstraps. Besides, foreign trade was unlikely to be terribly important for India in the early phase of growth; the post-Korean War experience confirmed that. So there was no harm in adhering to the assumption of a closed system.

Mahalanobis' model was an "operational" one, it was stripped for action. The economy was thought to consist of two sectors—producing, respectively, investment goods and consumption goods. This was Feldman, this was an echo of Karl Marx's reproductive scheme, but this was also quintessential Mahalanobis.

With a given technology—and therefore a given capital-output ratio—growth of output depends on the rate of investment. Is not, however, in a closed system the rate of investment identical, at any given point of time, with the proportion of investment goods to the total supply of goods? For accelerating growth, what is therefore necessary is to increase this proportion.

This in turn called for the conceptual bifurcation of the investment goods, or capital goods, sector: one subsector produces machines which produce further machines, the other subsector produces machines which produce consumption goods. If the allocation of investment for the production of machines which manufacture further machines is jacked up, the overall proportion of investment goods will rise in the economy. So too therefore the rate of investment and hence the rate of growth as well.

To sum up, if the objective is to speed up growth—self-reliant growth—it is crucial to increase the rate of investment, which means reducing the rate of consumption (both expressed as proportions of national income).

The stratagem relevant for the purpose is to raise the proportion of investment goods and lower the proportion of consumer goods in the aggregate national income. That will do the trick; the economy is closed, the possibility of exporting a portion of investment goods for importing an extra supply of consumption is excluded and the citizenry cannot eat up machines, or drape machines round the body. Once the rate of consumption is lowered in this manner, the rate of investment will increase automatically.

A lot of what Americans call "Tuesday morning quarterbacking" has concentrated on this aspect of the Mahalanobis schemata. It is, it has been alleged, replete with Soviet illiberalism.

The inhumanity of the Soviet model, who does not know, has led to the collapse of the evi empire it spawned. Its soul mate, the Mahalanobis model, has led to an irrational bias in Indian planning in favour of investment in heavy industries, contributing thereby to a disastrous neglect of consumer industries and agriculture. Such misallocation is supposed to have been responsible, more than anything else, for the country's miserable economic performance over the decades.

Most of this polemics is beside the point. Mahalanobis, it bears repeating, was fully aware of the sociological reality of contemporary India. This is why he did not stop with the two sector model.

Mahalanobis' four sector model retained the allocational logic for the investment goods sector. At the same time it divided the consumption goods sector into three: the factory consumer goods sector, household industries (including, by implication, agriculture) and finally a sector producing services and intermediate goods.

Each sector had its assigned capital-output ratio but, what is of equal significance, its labour-output ratio as well. The aspect of employment was thus brought into the format of planning.

Mahalanobis worked out a consistency exercise which married the objective of a high rate of growth with that of full employment of labour. The message was loud and clear, it was also loaded with a moral overtone: full employment diffuses income across the economy; income and consumption need to be fairly equitably distributed.

Mahalanobis, after all, had presided over an official committee which delved into the problems of income distribution and levels of living afflicting a nation. He was as much aware as any of his armchair critics of the necessity for a humane, viable rearrangement of the economic system. The studies in perspective planning which he encouraged, under the auspices of both the Indian Statistical Institute and the Planning

Commission, were intended to articulate this goal of combining aggregative growth over time with the satisfaction of basic needs.

If the history of economic growth in the country in the past few decades nonetheless makes dismal reading, that could not be on account of any idiosyncrasies of the Mahalanobis model. For that model, which strongly influenced the formulation of the Second Five Year Plan, was a nonstarter; it was not tried out at all.

◆

THE egalitarianism latent in the model scared the daylights out of the political conservatives occupying the society's upper crust. They had one stupendous advantage over Mahalanobis. He was an interloper; they, on the other hand, controlled the administration. Their opportunity arrived in the very first year of the Second Plan. The bureaucracy arranged to relax, very generously, the regime of import licences, thereby presenting the nation with, all of a sudden, a first rate foreign exchange crisis.

Nehru was taken for a ride, or perhaps he was all along a complaisant horseman: planning, particularly planning of the genre Mahalanobis had in mind, was, it was explained to Nehru, an irrelevance in the emerging situation. In any case, the professor's was a somewhat amateurish model, since it was seemingly unaware of the crucial importance of the foreign trade sector in a modern economy.

The capitalist press made its own contribution to the cacophony. Only the United States, it was hinted, could bail India out in the circumstances. The establishment in New Delhi crossed over, with consummate ease, from the growth lobby to the foreign aid lobby. A commissioner of foreign aid was posted in Washington. John Foster Dulles' prejudices did not stand in the way and the US Administration announced in mid-1958 its first quota of aid to India.

There was jubilation in New Delhi and Bombay; the *Economic Weekly* commented with biting sarcasm: "Parched earth has been blessed by the first offering of water." The Mahalanobis model as an operational manual fell by the wayside, so too his dream of combining heavy industry growth with a parallel expansion of labour absorbing consumption goods and service sectors.

A survey of the current scene makes one grow, once more, aware of the timelessness attached to the perspective Mahalanobis brought to bear on Indian reality. His emphasis was on two prime issues: one, austerity now is crucial for prosperity tomorrow and, two, export pessimism is a sound enough hypothesis for a country buffeted by conditions such as India was experiencing.

Because ruling politicians were persuaded not to take cognisance of the basic truth cloaked in these premises, we have ended up with a comprador system characterised by near stagnant growth, rising levels of unemployment and an external debt trap of frighteningly formidable proportions.

Through sheer happenstance, on account of the scope it provided to interested politicians and civil servants for personal aggrandisement, one bit of the Mahalanobis dream—enlarging the nation's infrastructural heavy industry base—has met with partial fulfilment.

We should be beholden for that. For in case there is a change of order in New Delhi and the nation returns to the goal of economic and technological self-reliance, the impressive industrial infrastructure we now possess could provide the appropriate jumping board for attaining that objective.

Meanwhile, there should be consolation in the thought that, while we have dispensed with planning, Mahalanobis' pioneering work and organisational leadership have acted as a multiplier for a tremendous frenzy of creativity. This has involved the construction of a large array of sophisticated plan models and other analytical exercises which have vastly extended the frontiers of knowledge.

Yet another irony: while Mahalanobis' growth model had the underpinning of a closed system, the ambience he ensured in the Indian Statistical Institute, with a continuous stream of visiting scholars from all over exchanging ideas and thoughts, helped globalise our economists. Whether this has been a bane or a blessing is a theme worth mulling over during our bluer moods. ■

(Courtesy: *The Telegraph*)

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EDITORIAL

Catch the Guilty

While media attention continues to be focussed on scamster Harshad Mehta's alleged Rs 1 crore pay-off to the Prime Minister of India, the Comptroller and Auditor General's scathing indictment of the manner in which public sector disinvestment has been carried out (resulting in a Rs 3442 crore loss to the exchequer on account of under-realisation due to low priced sales) is of no less significance.

The CAG report on the subject has prompted Arjun Singh, the Union Minister for Human Resource Development, to raise a highly pertinent point: the sale of scrips at prices 200-300 per cent lower than the prevailing market rates, he insists, has strengthened suspicions of a sinister design behind this whole operation to rob the public sector units of their assets behind their back. He has highlighted this in a recent letter to the Prime Minister and strongly deplored the fact that instead of taking stringent action against the officials responsible for such an eventuality these figures have been allowed to go scot free.

The CAG report exposes the scandal over the public sector disinvestment in every detail. First, such blue chips as the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) and Indian Petrochemicals Corporation Limited (IPCL) were clubbed with loss-making public sector concerns at the time of disinvestment. The respective ministries supervising these units had opposed this move on the ground that the blue chips could realise better value for their equity through direct offers to the public. But the government overruled this objection.

Secondly, even the low "reserve prices" worked out for the bidding were not adhered to. As a result, "refixed reserved prices" were evolved through drastic reductions of the already low "reserved prices"—the reductions ranging from 21.95 per cent per bundle to as high as 86.67 per cent. In reality some bundles were almost gifted away, as has been noted by a perceptive observer who can claim full credit for having unearthed the multicrore securities scam alongwith its star performers including Harshad Mehta and Hiten Dalal.

According to the same intrepid journalist,

> Worse, the bidding was so low that even an average auctioneer would have balked at such a sale, but not the Indian Government which was selling off its crown jewels. As many as 24 out of 31 PSEs faced a reduction in valuation of over 50 per cent...
>
> So criminal and thoughtless was the disinvestment that the government having figured out that financial institutions had Rs 2000 to Rs 2500 crores to invest, offered equity worth Rs 8000 crores in the first phase. The bidding was disastrous as 73 per cent of the bids had only one bidders—the others simply stayed away.
>
> No lessons were learnt from the first phase, and the second round saw four out of 19 bidders account for 68 per cent of the bids received. (Sucheta Dalal, "Under-pricing of PSU shares: Another scam?", *The Sunday Times of India*, July 4, 1993)

Dr Manmohan Singh has, in a bid to ward off the Joint Parliamentary Committee's strictures against him, claimed that the scam was not the product of his policy of reforms but the old policy of controls he is seeking to dismantle today. The scandalous operation relating to the public sector disinvestement has nailed the lie on the score.

The CAG has been sharply critical of the (a) sale of public sector shares through private transactions violating normal procedure; (b) failure of the disinvestment scheme to realise the aim of raising non-inflationary resources; (c) inability to ensure wide public participation since a limited number of institutions took part in the bid.

Additionally, while a Committee had been set up by the government to advise it on disinvestment, decisions were actually taken by a coterie comprising the present Finance Secretary (and former Secretary of Economic Affairs), the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, and the Secretary of Heavy Industry.

It needs to be stressed that the entire policy of public sector disinvestment, as is now clear from subsequent developments, had been undertaken by the Finance Ministry as part of Manmohanomics to scrap the public sector. This well-planned strategy included the concerted campaign to denigrate the public sector as a whole. The CAG revelation points to the fact that the Rs 3442 crore loss to the exchequer played havoc in stock exchange speculation which in turn had produced the multicrore scam.

In the light of the CAG report the government is duty-bound to conduct a thorough probe into the entire scandal. But the Finance Ministry should not be allowed to carry out the investigation precisely because the accusing fingure has been pointed at it.

Meanwhile, one is perfectly justified in demanding that there must be a halt to the process of public sector disinvestment until the probe is completed. This must be ensured at the earliest as the Finance Ministry is going ahead with its plans for the next round of disinvestment.

Parliament must discuss the whole issue threadbare. This should have been taken up by the JPC as well since the case is intimately connected with the securities scam the manifold ramifications of which that parliamentary committee has been directed to bring out in bold relief.

Above all, what is imperative is that the guilty men striving their utmost to destroy the public sector must be brought to book at the earliest. That indeed is the demand of national interest and national self-respect, the two vital assets of our freedom struggle the Fund-Bank associates in the Finance Ministry have been assiduously trying to undermine for a substantial length of time.

July 7 S.C.

DOCUMENT

NGOs' Appeal to UN Security Council

The following appeal was issued in Geneva on July 3, 1993. —Editor

The undersigned NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC, condemn the US bombing of Baghdad under the pretext of self-defence in retaliation for an alleged attempt on the life of former US President George Bush.

This attack is incompatible with the international law and the Charter of the UN. The US Government's attempt to justify this aggressive action under Article 51 of the UN Charter which only permits self-defence "if an armed attack occurs against a member of the United Nations*" is totally unacceptable.

The Security Council must not permit the UN Charter to be misinterpreted. We call upon the Security Council to condemn the US action and to take steps to prevent any further attacks.

We further urge the Security Council to call on the US Government to pay compensation to the victims and their families for loss of life, injury, and destruction caused by the US attack.

Signed by:

1. *International Youth & Student Movement for the UN*
2. *General Arab Women's Federation*
3. *Union of Arab Jurists*
4. *War Resistance International*
5. *Women's International Democratic Federation*
6. *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom*
7. *World Xian Life Community*
8. *World Federation of Trade Unions*
9. *World Peace Council*
10. *World Young Women's Christian Association*
11. *International League for the Rights and Liberties of People*

**Article 51 (UN Charter):*

Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Congress: Ominous Forebodings

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

The wages of disunity and indecision seem to be overtaking the Congress in the most serious crisis that it has brought upon the country. In a sense, Harshad Mehta, the prime character in the Rs 500 crore stock-exchange scandal, has turned out to be the unwitting instrument of History insofar as he has opened the gates to not only the destabilisation of the present establishment but the disintegration of the Congress itself.

The Narasimha Rao Government, precariously perched without majority support in the Lok Sabha, is now shown up as being utterly fragile, a house divided against itself. One would have normally expected that a minority government would at least be well-knit within itself, so that its internal cohesion attracts support from other political parties on matters of national concern. Although during his first year as the Prime Minister Narasimha Rao gave the impression of having achieved cohesion through his consensus approach, it got shattered with the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6 last year. That attack on the very authority of the Centre not only debilitated him and his government vis-a-vis the Opposition parties, but also weakened his position within the Congress party itself with different factions raising their heads.

Here is an amazing example of a government assailed by adversaries from outside being undermined from within the ruling party itself. This process of disunity within the party getting accelerated with the onslaught on its authority from outside has betrayed the basic weakness of the present Narasimha Rao Government. In other words, the Congress today has demonstrated that it has become incapable of enforcing unity within its own ranks just at the very moment when the party President himself is the target of vicious attack from an admittedly disreputable source.

This is amply borne out by the events of the last six months. Narasimha Rao sustained a serious blow to his standing with the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6. The fact that this happened without any active intervention on the part of the Central Government to physically obstruct the demolition squad of the militant wing of the *kar sevaks*, not only alienated him from a large body of Muslim opinion in this country but was also taken by the Arjun Singh camp as a vindication of its all-out stand of combating the BJP. In fact, Arjun Singh had favoured the sacking of the BJP Ministry in UP to forestall the *Sangh Parivar's kar seva* which resulted in the Babri Masjid demolition on December 6. This led to the peremptory dismissal of the four State Governments ruled by the BJP and the banning of a number of organisations belonging to the *Sangh Parivar*.

The spate of communal violence that came in the wake of December 6 did not lead to the closing of ranks within the Congres to fight the new menace; rather it intensified bitter acrimony between the contending Congres factions, with the Prime Minister's critics accusing him of surrendering to the BJP while Narasimha Rao's supporters branded the critics as fostering dissent. This was the time when Arjun Singh embarrassed the government by openly demanding that it must apologise to the Muslim community for the happenings on December 6 and after. This demand, in turn, infuriated the Narasimha loyalists. By the time the AICC met at Surajkund towards the end of March, dissident supporters of Arjun Singh came out in the open and consequently were suspended from the party, while he himself felt cornered. On the other hand, Sharad Pawar had his field day at Surajkund where, among other things, he strongly vetoed any move to ban the Shiv Sena.

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THE next phase, reaching its climax with Harshad Mehta's serious allegations against the Prime Minister on June 16, saw a veritable shift in the alignment within the Congress. In the urgent meetings of the Congress leaders in the wake of Harshad Mehta's charges and their political reverberations, Sharad Pawar was reported to have made critical references to the mishandling of the serious case at the Central level. Surprisingly, Sharad Pawar was dropped from the so-called core group formed by Narasimha Rao to plan out the party programme for the crusade against the BJP in view of the impending elections in the four States from where the BJP was removed from government.

Not surprisingly, Sharad Pawar was conspicuous by his absence at the Bhopal meeting of the Congress Working Committee on June 26. At the rest-cure home where has was recouping from fatigue, he interestingly had a widely-publicised pow-wow with the Shiv Sena chief, Bal Thackeray, while the Congress Working Committee came out with a flaming declaration against the BJP. Curiously enough, there is no reference in it to any Congress call for combating corruption in public life—an omission which will only help the Opposition, particularly the BJP, which has taken up the fight against corruption as the central plank of its national campaign.

From this, one may legitimately conclude that the Prime Minister is dealing with his rivals within the party one at a time on the calculation that the two cannot join hands. No doubt it is true that both are swearing allegiance to him. The appearance, however, belies the reality. It will be naive to think that these two leaders with their well-marked and well-oiled factions are not planning for the day-after-tomorrow.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE :
A Case for basic change/
Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer

1993, xiv, 164, Demy 8 vo.
ISBN 81-7018-755-9 • Rs. 150

The book is a critical study and suggests curative strategies which deserve the attention of all those who are deeply concerned with the fulfilment of the Constitution's first promise to the Indian people, viz: justice—social, economic and political.

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B.R. PUBLISHING CORPORATION, Delhi

Although Harshad Mehta has hardly come out with flying colours from his marathon grilling before the JPC, he has succeeded in sowing distrust about more ministerial characters besides the Prime Minister. Next on the agenda is the examination by the JPC of the minor characters who figure in the Harshad allegations against the Prime Minister. Already there has come appalling mismanagement by the official side in their job of refuting Harshad's charges—particularly the bungling regarding the register of the Prime Minister's callers on the crucial day of November 4, 1991. The general public reaction is that neither version is trustworthy—the Big Bull's and the officials. In fact, the official side has further undermined its position by clamping down censorship on the video magazine probing into the story. In view of all this, the JPC examination of other witnesses on the Prime Minister's side, apart from his personal appearance, may hardly help to scotch the suspicion regarding big money transfer by the Bull to the VVIPs.

Meanwhile, the CBI's patently partisan moves will only help to strengthen the credibility of the complaints of the former CBI Deputy Director, Madhavan, who had been forced into retirement in the very midst of the scam probe.

Then comes the tempestuous climax when Parliament reopens on July 26. From all indications, it is not going to be just a formal no-confidence motion, conducted in a civilised manner. More likely, it will be a boisterous prospect in which the Prime Minister will be the target of attack, clinging on to an unenviable position with the slump in his credibility. At that critical stage, will his rivals within the party stand solidly by his side? Or, more likely, will they not move to persuade him to step down in the interest of the party? If that happens, that may turn out to be the end of Aurangzeb's reign that saw the inexorable break-up of the Mughal empire.

Weeks of excitement ahead, weeks of ominous forebodings for the Congress. ■

BJP Resolution on Bangladeshi Migrants

Open Invitation to Lynching

M.N. BUCH

The Bharatiya Janata Party, at its annual convention in Calcutta, passed a resolution that it would oust illegal Bangladeshi migrants from the city. The party has gone on to define a Hindu Bangladeshi as a refugee and a Muslim Bangladeshi migrant as an illegal entrant into India. Sikander Bakht, its Vice-President, has tried to make a distinction between Nepalese and Bangladeshis on the ground that we have a special relationship with Nepal and, secondly, Indian laws give the Nepalese almost all the rights enjoyed by an Indian citizen.

Every nation has a right to distinguish between its own citizens and others in the matter of domicile, franchise or property rights. The Indian Constitution, while firmly rejecting the concept of dual citizenship, does permit different States to distinguish between those Indians in that State and other Indians in certain matters, especially ownership of property.

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THE Fifth Schedule, which relates to Article 242, gives both the President and Governors sweeping powers with regard to the scheduled areas in the matter of the administrative system, applicability of laws, land ownership, and debt relief. A Governor can even repeal a law of Parliament in a scheduled area by framing regulations.

These provisions of the Constitution are acceptable to all parties, including the BJP, which only supports the view that it is within the competence of the national government to decide on how to deal with foreigners, including Bangladeshis. The popular upsurge in Assam was aimed at the Bangladeshi migration into that State and successive governments have stated that migrants who have come after a cut-off date would not only lose their franchise but would also face eviction. To this extent the BJP's stand on the Bangladeshis is unexceptionable.

However, from this point on, everything that the BJP has said about the Bangladeshis is not only unacceptable but positively horrifying. Bangladesh does not recognise two categories of citizens, Muslims and Hindus. How then can an Indian political party make such a distinction? Undoubtedly, before the Bangladesh war Pakistanis had systematically driven out Hindus from East Pakistan and their presence in India was one of the causes of the war. After Bangladesh had become independent, such large-scale movement of Hindus stopped, notwithstanding the allegation that the Hindus are not receiving a fair deal in Bangladesh. In fact, most of the migrants from Bangladesh are Muslims, as the BJP's own allegations show.

These Muslims are refugees in the sense that they have left their own country, where there are few employment opportunities, and moved to India where there is relative prosperity. They are not part of some grand Islamic design to flood India with Muslims, who would breed like rabbits and overtake the Hindu population. K.R. Malkani has repeatedly written that he favours some sort of a federation of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. A federation which does not permit free movement of its citizens, including from relatively high-pressure Muslim-majority areas to relatively low-pressure Hindu-majority (and Muslim-minority) areas, would be no federation at all. The presence of these poor Bangladeshi Muslims in India cannot, even by the wildest stretch of the imagination, be a threat to India's security. This republic is stable enough to sustain a thin stream of migrants.

Britain, which faces a massive unemployment problem, has turned increasingly against Coloured foreigners. A similar phenomenon is to be observed

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in Germany. The reaction of a section of society in those countries to the presence of migrants is immediately condemned as being neo-Nazi, fascist extreme Right-wing, racist and worse. How then to view the BJP's attitude to a group of migrants who, by coincidence, follow a particular religion? If national security is the question, considering what Subash Ghising and his associates are doing in Darjeeling, we should be more worried about Nepalese migrants than anyone else. The BJP, of course, regards the Nepalese as being different from everyone else and treats them as an integral part of Indian society. By its utterances against the Bangladeshi Muslim migrants it is only exposing its own communal bias.

As a party aspiring to power in a secular republic, which is multi-ethnic and multi-religious, the BJP will have to give serious thought to its policy on the Muslims. What the party has said in Calcutta does not inspire confidence and disappoints those who have looked upon the BJP as a possible political alternative at the national level. The BJP has projected itself as a law and order party and its record in power supported this contention. Law and order itself stems from rule of law. This is diametrically opposed to lynch law.

APPEAL TO CITIZENS

The outrage at Ayodhya and subsequent events have rudely shaken the foundations of communal amity and threatened the very existence of the modern Indian State.

The paramount need today is to promote awareness of this crisis and secure the commitment of citizens to the ideals of secularism and democracy. Please sign the pledge and retain a copy of the pledge and display it prominently in your home/workplace. The campaign's objective is to collect 2 crore individual pledges over a certain period of time.

You can make photocopies of this pledge and become a volunteer by collecting more signatures for the campaign. At the end of this campaign a public rally should be organised in every town/city where the pledges have been taken.

Pledge

- **I have a dream of a peaceful, united, humane, egalitarian and prosperous India.**
- **I believe that this dream cannot be realised without rooting out communalism from our land.**
- **I pledge myself to preserve and strengthen, India's unity and communal harmony.**
- **I solemnly commit myself to the vow which Gandhiji asked of all Indians:**

"With God as witness, we Hindus and Mohamedans declare that we shall behave towards one another as children of the same parents, that we shall have no differences, that the sorrows of each shall be the sorrows of the other and that each shall help the other in removing them. We shall respect each other's religion and religious feelings and shall not stand in the way of our respective religious practices. We shall always refrain from violence to each other in the name of religion."

Signature ________________ Name ________________

Address ________________________________

________________________ Date ________________

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Please post the signed pledge to: Editor, *Mainstream*,
F-24, Bhagat Singh Market, New Delhi 110 001.

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IN an ordered society a decision about who is or is not a citizen, a refugee or an illegal migrant must rest with an appropriate authority, duly empowered by law. In Assam special tribunals were set up to identify illegal migrants. Even if the migrants from Bangladesh are to be identified and possibly expelled, it is only a legally constituted authority which can perform this task.

The workers of a political party have no business to take the law in their own hands. The resolution passed by the BJP in Calcutta is an open invitation to lynching, with party workers going around and denouncing people arbitrarily as Bangladeshi migrants. The leaders of the BJP should ponder the consequences of allowing their followers a free hand because disrespect for law, which this would engender, would ultimately erode the foundations of society.

India has sheltered many more of the meek, the weak, the starving and the persecuted than has the USA. Throwing out a number of Bangladeshis will not enrich this country, but their cries of anguish as they starve to death in an already impoverished Bangladesh will forever lie on the Indian conscience. If India could sustain 30 million Bangladeshi Hindus in 1971, it can also absorb a few million Bangladeshi Muslims without turning a hair. What we cannot bear are the curses of the hungry who have been turned away by a cruel society. ■

(Courtesy: *The Statesman*)

All Human Rights For All

A Report on the World Conference on Human Rights (NGO-Forum)

HARSH SETHI

On the occasion of the second United Nations World Conference on Human Rights, an NGO-Forum 'All Human Rights For All' was organised in Vienna from June 10 to 12, 1993. Over 2000 participants representing a total of over 1000 NGOs active in the field of human rights and development attended the Conference. Clearly, 25 years after the First World Conference held in Teheran, this represented a unique opportunity for human rights activists from all over to present both to the United Nations and the Inter-government Meeting on Human Rights the range and essence of their thinking and experience. While the primary purpose of such an exercise was to lobby and influence the official agendas of the different states, the presence of the world media simultaneously provided an opportunity to speak to peoples at large. Above all, the Forum offered a site where activists from different locations, different thematic concerns, even different perspectives could converse with each other, exchange experiences and analyses and thus work towards a global network of concerned activists.

The Conference itself was structured around the opening and closing plenaries and five major working groups on: 1) general evaluation of progress made in the field of human rights, and of the overall effectiveness of UN standards and mechanisms; 2) assessment of the present state of rights of indigenous peoples; 3) evaluation of the present state of the protection of women's rights; 4) examination of the relationship between human rights, development and democracy; and 5) examination of the current trends in human rights violations as a result of racism, xenophobia, ethnic violence and religious intolerance with a particular focus on minorities. In addition, the opening plenary established additional working groups on: a) military/para-military/police and political repression/missing/disppearance/torture/foreign occupation and human rights; b) the human rights of children and working people; c) forced eviction, displacement and housing rights; d) the caste system, untouchability, bonded labour and the role of the UN; e) human rights of disabled persons; and f) beyond Vienna: building the human rights movement.

The plenary elected Ms Albertina Sisulu (South Africa) as the Chairperson of the Conference, while Manfred Nowak (Austria) served as the General Rapporteur. Keynote speeches were delivered by Ibrahama Fall (Secretary-General of the World Conference on Human Rights), Vera Chirwa (Malawi), Sheikh Hasina (Bangladesh), Issan Abdulhadi (Pakistan), Jonathan Mann (USA), Jimmy Carter (USA) and Adolfo Perez Esguivel (Argentina). Parallel to the main Conference, dozens of activities were carried out by different NGOs and special interest groups in stalls, either in the corridors of the Austria Center or in the NGO Fair tent. Overall, the activities in the formal sessions and in the special interest stalls provided rich fare to the interested.

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GIVEN the extensive and elaborate arrangements made at the conference site, the rich experience and documentation available in the presence of over 2000 activists, and the complex run-up (three regional meetings of NGOs in Bangkok, Tunis and Quitto; four preparatory committee meetings in Geneva)—the actual unfolding of the process took at least this participant by surprise. From the outset, it was apparent that a wide gulf divided the Joint Planning Committee (JPC) responsible for planning the Conference and the participants. In the opening plenary itself, serious doubts were raised, particularly by the NGOs from the South, about the credentials of the JPC.

The author is a Research Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi. He attended the NGO Conference on Human Rights at Vienna last month as an Indian participant.

Charges were levelled that the JPC was acting more as a hand-maiden of the countries from the North; that it had unnecessarily accepted UN restrictions related to procedures and conduct of the meeting, about the presence of the media at the conference site, about raising country-specific issues, etc. Further, it was alleged that the JPC in conjunction with the organisers of the official inter-governmental conference had acquiesced in the cancellation of invitations to 17 NGOs as also to the Dalai Lama. (The latter, as it turned out, was an incorrect allegation.) The participants were equally incensed about the administrative arrangements which resulted in nearly 100 of the 130 African NGOs not receiving their tickets on time.

The ensuring furore led to the JPC accepting major amendments to the rules regarding the Press as also the raising of country-specific issues. As for issues relating to NGO participation in the official forum, the matter was left to further negotiation. What was clear from the very beginning was that the JPC had erred both in its understanding of the NGO world, which today is no longer a pale imitation of the United Nations, as also on the primary purpose of this interaction. As indicated earlier, while making specific recommendations to the UN World Conference was undoubtedly an important objective, it was equally important that this assembly of NGOs come up with an autonomous statement of its own. The failure on the latter front, the missing out of a historical opportunity, while partly attributable to the JPC and its 'conditioning' of the Conference, was equally due to the inability of the participating NGOs to evolve a proper mode of functioning. Just pillorying the JPC as a marker of radical distinction, while undoubtedly capturing media attention, could by itself contribute little to the task of evolving an all-encompassing statement of norms and action which could guide human rights NGOs and movements in the future.

Notwithstanding the limitations of participation and procedure (most participants were completely baffled by the rules governing the mode of intervention and thus were unable to make either oral or written depositions), the Vienna Conference did underscore a range of important principles as also indicated crucial points of departure from conventional thinking on rights. For instance, the Conference as a whole underlined the *universality, indivisibility* and *interdependence* of human rights and stressed that *claims of relativism*, whether on account of religion and culture or level of development, *could never justify violations of human rights*. Further, it recommended the establishment of a UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, of an International Criminal Court to prosecute gross violations, and a Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Commission on violence against women and gender discrimination as a means of fully integrating women's rights as human rights.

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AS distinct from the thinking of many states, particularly from Asia, the NGO Conference strongly recommended that all member-states of the UN take immediate steps to ratify all Conventions on Human Rights, including the Optional Protocols, and supported the principle of sanctions against offender nations. Some went so far as to demand that offending nations be barred from the membership of the UN. This plea to bring not just all nations but all international relations, including those of economy, trade and development, under a regimen of International Human Rights Law raises serious questions about the extant notions of sovereignty. The same thinking was evident in the proposals to significantly increase the UN Human Rights budget as also its mandate and power to intervene in countries and situations of human rights abuse.

Contrast the above with the Bangkok Declaration on Human Rights by the Asian states in April 1993. Not only had many of the Asian states stressed the importance of 'the principle of respect for national sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of states'; and specifically 'discouraged attempts to use human rights as a conditionality for extending development assistance'; had warned against the use of human rights as an instrument of political pressure, specially the need to avoid the application of double standards in the implementation of human rights. Further, while accepting the indivisibility of human rights, the Asian states were inclined towards privileging the right to development of states as a necessary precondition towards achieving universal human rights. Reportedly, China, Malaysia and Indonesia had argued against the notion of universality of rights and stressed the importance of broader cultural factors in evolving appropriate and implementable rights in different zones.

With respect to the rights of the indigenous people, the Conference stressed the distinct characteristics of indigenous peoples which distinguish them from minorities. It further urged that indigenous peoples be recognised as nations with inherent collective rights of self-determination, development, self-government and autonomy.

Even on this issue, the thinking of the Asian states has been somewhat different. Some of them, namely, India and China, do not recognise the category of 'indigenous peoples'. All of them are apprehensive that the linkage of the principles of self-determination with indigenous peoples may prove the thin end of the wedge by promoting separatism and secession. For instance, Resolution 13 of the Bangkok Declaration reads:

> Stress that the right to self-determination is applicable to peoples under alien or colonial domination and foreign occupation, and should not be used to undermine the territorial integrity, national sovereignty and political independence of states.

The real departure as also the success in this Conference related to issues regarding women's rights. It was evident that the Women's Caucus, an international network of women's groups, was the best prepared and organised to get its point of view heard. The fact that every working group made major recommendations on women's rights, flagged issues of gender violation (both in the public and private spheres), reiterated support to measures to increase women's access to decision-making powers, and managed to get gender abuses recognised as crimes against humanity—is a clear indication of the relative success of the International Women's Movement.

Equally important, though less visible in the Conference, was the thinking and recommendations dealing with issues of ethnic violence and intolerance. Even here, a major stress was on addressing the violation of women's rights in the shadow of religious and cultural particularism. Alongside other recommendations dealing with children, disabled persons, migrants, workers, on strengthening mechanisms to reduce civil and political violations, etc. what the conference ended with was an exhaustive reiteration of the primacy of rights, their universal, indivisible and inviolate nature.

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A few words at this stage about the Indian presence would be in order. Indian NGOs formed a substantial grouping in the Conference, though unlike the Women's Caucus they were expectedly ill-organised and consequently relatively ineffective. What was noteworthy was that the Indian NGOs were unwilling to go along with the official position of the Indian Government—be it on the issue of human rights conditionalities, on the establishment of a UN Commissioner on Human Rights, on the position that the states are the properly constituted entities to ensure and safeguard human rights, on the issues related to limitation of sovereignty, or on the rights of the indigenous peoples. While most Indian NGOs were unwilling to support 'extremist' Sikh or Kashmiri views related to state terrorism or for declaring the Sikhs as a sovereign people without a state, they seemed equally reluctant to support the official view on terrorism as a major source of human rights violations. In fact, notwithstanding sharp differences within the Indian NGO community, the item on which Indian groups seemed prepared to act in concert related to the preparation of a statement pillorying the Indian Government on issues of arbitrariness and bringing in 'lawless' laws like the TADA, NSA, etc. to curb dissent. If such a statement, possibly in conjunction with other South Asian groups, does get released, it is likely to prove extremely embarrassing to the Indian Government. Alongside, the demonstrations related to the ongoing struggles in the Narmada Valley, the official projection of India as a democracy wedded to the rule of law and protection of human rights is likely to be considerably frayed.

It also needs to be noted that unlike the official US delegation which throughout the NGO-Forum made strenuous efforts to lobby all NGOs (and not just those from the US), to its point of view, the official Indian strategy appeared unfocussed. Prior to the Vienna Conference, meetings were organised in Delhi, both by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Home Affairs, to dialogue with the NGO representatives attending the Vienna Conference. But these meetings were more at the instance of the NGOs rather than the government. Further, the government, even one day prior to the Vienna Conference, was not in a position to distribute their official position paper. All it did was to stress that the NGOs should not fall prey to propaganda about violation of rights in Punjab and Kashmir, should oppose the proposal of the Office of the UN Commissioner on Human Rights, and should argue against the principle of human rights conditionalities. Even in Vienna, only one Indian official made some attempts to contact and talk to the Indian NGOs. And he constantly complained about the lack of cooperation from officials at the Indian Embassy.

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AT the end of the three days, at least this participant was left with mixed feelings, which most favourably can only be described as 'guarded optimism'. While a generalised assertion of human rights does need to be welcomed, as does the assertion of autonomy from the official perspective of states—the relative inability of the NGO community present in Vienna to get its act together and operate in consort was disappointing. What, however, was even more disconcerting was the streak of radical though naive populism governing the NGO positions and behaviour. They, in general, seemed oblivious of both the reality of international political relations and the practicalities of ensuring and safeguarding rights. Whether it was in the NGO assembly's construction of the JPC as the 'undesirable other', frequently leading to wild charges, unseemly behaviour and a breakdown of proceedings, or in the decision of the NGOs from the South not to permit Jimmy Carter to address the concluding plenary, the frequent outbursts of existential frustration and the targeting of 'enemies' without concern for form and procedure, does not augur well for the future. After the Carter episode, one of the participants, a leading human rights lawyer from Pakistan, went up to the dais and described this behaviour as fascistic.

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But what really disturbed this participant was the lack of serious debate in evolving position. Are we really at a stage where we, as human rights activists, ought to be arguing as if we are living in a global civil society where global (read UN) instrumentalities and mechanisms would guarantee individual human rights? The undermining of national sovereignties, particularly in the context of a North-South divide, and the need to discipline non-state actors like MNCs appeared particularly naive. So did the acceptance of the resolutions related to indigenous peoples and their right to self-determination. Similarly, while governments which seek to take shelter behind cultural particularism need to be pilloried, can we so completely disregard the embedded nature of rights, or the fact that they evolve in specific contexts? This, when we set such great store by pluralism.

Overall, the NGO human rights movement needs to seriously debate these and other issues, as also evolve proper modes of conduct to prepare itself for the long engagement that lies ahead before we can with any degree of confidence talk about 'All Human Rights For All'. ■

The Left in India: Problems and Prospects

BIPAN CHANDRA

Dr Bipan Chandra is a distinguished historian and Professor of History in the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. The following is an extract from the introduction to his Essays on Contemporary India *(published by Har-Anand Publications, New Delhi this year).* —Editor

The fate of the Left in India has been paradoxical. Ever since its emergence in the form of the Communist Party and the Congress Socialist Party and numerous small groups and the Left trend in the National Congress led by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose, the future of the Left has all the time looked bright. In particular, it has made a powerful appeal to the youth and the intelligentsia. Yet, at every stage, when the breakthrough appeared imminent, it has belied its promise. It has suffered massive setbacks at critical moments, followed by prolonged periods of stagnation. The Socialist Party has completely disintegrated and disappeared from the scene, leaving the Communist Party (parties) as the sole, organised Left political force. The Left has remained 'small but growing'.

Repeated setbacks and prolonged stagnation should have been a chastening experience, forcing even the most die-hard to take a critical look at their political and theoretical practice. But the Communists and other Left groups and individuals have consistently refused to do so, for the Left has seldom faced the sort of marginalisation that has been the fate of the Communists in many other parts of the world. The extreme poverty of the people and the all-pervading inequality, injustice and inhuman exploitation have provided a perpetually favourable soil for the existence and growth of the Left, however inept and ineffectual its politics.

Yet, it will be foolhardy for the Left to live under a false sense of security that such a favourable material and intellectual atmosphere would last forever. The massive defeat of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and its equally massive retreat in China have a lesson to teach. For the bell tolls for the Communists and the Left in India too; they too face marginalisation. The future of the Left in India depends on how it relates to the worldwide collapse of communism, what lessons it draws and what remedial steps it takes. This future would be dark indeed if a mindless defence of Stalinism or the 'existing socialism' is put up or if a sharp break with the past approaches of the Left is not made. The Left has to come to terms with the history of the Russian Revolution and its 75-year old aftermath. It has to ask why the dream that inspired millions to make immense sacrifices under the leadership of Lenin, one of the truly greats of history, turned into a nightmare.

A major weakness of the Indian Left has been its failure to make a concrete study of the real situation, of the actual course of developments, or of the concrete social forces contending for hegemony or supremacy. It has consequently failed to evolve a long-term strategy for bringing about social change. Indian reality has been constantly undergoing changes, but these changes were seldom recognised by the Left in time or often at all, leading to its politics being increasingly distanced from reality. For example, it took the Communist Party nearly 10 years to recognise that India had achieved political independence in 1947 and over 40 years to accept that India had been undergoing a process of independent economic development. Large numbers on the Left are still looking for signs of feudal dominance in Indian agriculture.

Believing that in the present epoch all types of capitalist development is reactionary, the Communists and the Socialists have failed to make a concrete analysis of the capitalist development taking place in India and, therefore, failed to distinguish between capitalist development based on rapid industrialisation and agricultural growth and economic underdevelopment, between democratic and reformist capitalism and reactionary and authoritarian capitalism; and between the capitalist path followed in Britain and the USA and the capitalist path followed in Bismarckian Germany, Tsarist Russia, Meiji Japan, Franco's

Spain or Horthy's Hungary. This has disabled the Left from influencing existing development in a more positive direction, in the direction of its own vision, in the direction of radical reform.

This has also deprived many on the Left of any sound criteria for deciding which political forces to support and which to oppose. In the 1950s most on the Left opposed Nehru while in 1967, 1977 and 1989 they lined up behind the retrograde casteist forces and made direct or indirect compromises with the communal parties. For years, in the name of opposing the big bourgeoisie and the capitalist path of development, they have been supporting the anti-developmental path under rich peasant hegemony, which also, incidentally, goes against the interests of the mass of poor and middle peasants and agricultural labourers.

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THE Indian Left has also had several theoretical failures. It has tried to answer the highly complex question as to how do parties and individuals represent class interests or socio-political forces through simplistic, 'vulgar' formulae or dictates of party programmes instead of making a detailed, empirically sound and complex theoretical and analytical effort. If such an effort had been made, the politics of anti-Congressism in every eventuality would not have been followed.

The Left has also, on the whole, failed to understand the momentous political significance of parliamentary democracy and civil liberties. This had to be a major area of new thinking. Democracy and civil liberties were not, as the Left has believed so long, a part of the structure of bourgeois rule, to be discarded by the bourgeoisie when endangered by the working people. They were to be seen as positive values in themselves, as providing a more meaningful way of living even under capitalism. Socialist democracy would have to be an advance over existing liberal democracy and not its negation, and it would have to find full expression in the day-to-day functioning and outlook of those working for a socialist society.

Moreover, the entire rules of political behaviour and the nature of political work would undergo a basic change in case of a democratic polity. Following Gramsci, the question has to be asked: What does it mean to be a revolutionary in a parliamentary democracy, even if flawed, in the India of today? If revolution means the empowerment of the people and social change in their favour, then clearly it can be brought about through the parliamentary process combined with non-violent mass movements.

The Communist Party did make a hesitant effort to come to grips with the problem at its Party Congress in 1958 under the leadership of Ajoy Ghosh and E.M.S. Namboodiripad, when it suggested that socialism could be achieved through peaceful and parliamentary means and that the socialist state in India would function through a multi-party system. But a large section of the party rejected this position as revisionist and reformist. The dominant leadership failed to develop and expand this position or even explain and defend it. And it was buried deep as a result of the Party split in 1964 after having been a factor in the split.

Another area where fresh thinking by the Left is due is that of the nation, nationalism and nation-building. It was because of the failure to evolve a proper understanding of nationalism and the relationship of a party and a movement to classes and strata that, despite their immense sacrifices in the anti-imperialist struggle, the Communists failed to relate meaningfully to the actual, historically developed national movement led by Gandhiji. And, consequently, they remained a minor force among the people and even the working class. In fact, a critical study of the Indian national movement can be extremely useful in building a socialist movement which incorporates divergent socialist trends and accommodates all those desirous of and willing to work for social change in the interests of the masses.

The Indian Left has also failed to study or undertake a serious analysis of its own history or contemporary political practice. After all, it has a lot to its credit. It gave a Left turn to the nationalist forces in the 1920s and 1930s. It has contributed a great deal to India remaining an independent, democratic and secular society and polity after independence. It has now ruled Kerala and Tripura off and on since 1957 and West Bengal for over 15 years. But it has drawn no theoretical lessons or programmatic conclusions from all this. The Indian Left has been in a far better position than the Euro-Communists or others to answer many contemporary questions of political theory and practice, for example, the nature of the state and state power, the relation between reform and revolution, how to build a broad class coalition for radical social ends—after all, the Left coalition in West Bengal includes semi-feudal *jotedars* and sections of the capitalist class.

Clearly, the complex and contradictory social development in India points to the need for immense theoretical effort, for genuine and resolute political and theoretical innovations, and for constant critical evaluation of the practice of social forces in India and abroad. The Left has too long made an attempt to solve complex problems by simple solutions. The result has been political stultification or politics based on opportunism, unguided by theory. ■

Half-truths on Seed Patents

SUMAN SAHAI

This beleaguered government, even before its chief executive was frontally accused of accepting a bribe, had lost so much credibility that no one seriously believes what it says any more. Nevertheless, it is important to rebut its patently false claims, even if only to set the record straight. With respect to the Dunkel Draft and the controversial clause on intellectual property, the government has begun to issue statements that national interests have been safeguarded by rejecting patents and accepting the *sui generis* system in its stead.

The fact is that the *sui generis* system will severely restrict the rights of farmers and breeders with far-reaching consequences for our agricultural self-reliance. This form of protection is called the Plant Breeders' Right (PBR). The protection confers on the holder of the PBR the exclusive right to produce seed of the protected variety for the seed trade, and control of its marketing. Codified in the UPOV (Union for the Protection of New Plant Varieties), PBRs offer monopoly on sale of the variety but not on the variety itself or its genes.

Thus any plant breeder could use any protected variety for further breeding work. This was referred to as the Breeders' Exemption. The other exemption granted under PBRs is the Farmers' Exemption. According to this, once the farmer had bought the protected seed, he had the right to use it to produce seed for himself for as many generations as he liked.

In 1991, however, under tremendous pressure from the US, the UPOV was compelled to amend the provisions of the PBR, making it more or less the same as patents. The Breeders' Exemption has been done away with. The Farmers' Exemption has been made optional and can only be granted if the PBR holder whose legitimate interests may not be jeopardised, allows it.

This, it can be understood, will almost never happen. Every PBR holder will want to maximise his sales and will certainly not allow farmers to produce seed for themselves, which they would otherwise have to buy from him. Thus the amended form of PBRs offer the same kind of ironclad protection that patents do.

The Commerce Ministry claims that the rights of our farmers and researchers will be protected fully if we accept the Dunkel Draft. These statements are false and deliberately misleading. The farmer whose traditional rights include the right to save, modify and sell seed, will be severely handicapped by the conditions of the Dunkel Text.

The government has failed to get any guarantees to protect the farmers' rights contrary to what it claims. Even if the farmer could save seed, he still loses the right to modify his seed to suit local requirements. This is a commonly prevalent custom and one responsible for the successful adaptation of new technologies at the village level.

Even worse, the traditional practice of selling seeds to other farmers, another custom which has been responsible for the quick dissemination of new, improved seed to remote, interior areas, will be abolished. The rapid distribution and acceptance of high yielding or disease resistant varieties has been possible because of a strong and viable inter-farmer network that allows technology to trickle down.

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THE government's contention is that the farmers'

The author is the Convenor of the Gene Campaign.

rights will not be affected because the "limited non-commercial exchange of seeds in the village community" can be retained under *sui generis* protection. This statement like others is intentionally misleading. The fact is that Indian farmers do not engage in "limited exchange of seeds". Of the 600,000 tonne seed requirement of Indian agriculture, not more than 38 per cent is met by formal agencies like the National and State Seed Corporations. The remaining 68 per cent of our needs are provided by inter-farmer sales.

This huge volume of trading in seed in the informal sector between farmers is the lifeline of Indian agriculture. This facility will be abolished if we accept the Dunkel Draft, with highly negative effects on seed availability and agricultural growth as well as the rights of farmers to control their means of production.

Yet another red herring drawn by the Commerce Ministry relates to the Breeders' Exemption, which the Ministry claims will be allowed should India accept the *sui generis* form of protection. What is in fact permitted is the researcher's exemption as distinct from the Breeders' Exemption. What will be taken away is not the right to research but the right to use the fruits of research, which is what we need to have.

We can, so to speak, continue to study problems relating to protected varieties in a laboratory, but we cannot apply this research or make commercial use of it. This difference needs to be understood carefully to realise that we will lose the right to derive benefit from protected genetic material, which in most cases will anyway be ours. It will, for example, mean that our scientists and breeders will not have free access to protected plant varieties to breed new improved varieities suited to our particular agricultural conditions, since this would amount to commercial application of research.

To underscore their determination to enforce patents on genetic material, senior American officials have recently threatened to withdraw funding from Indo-American research projects, particularly on biological materials, that could lead to commercially marketable products and processes, unless India accepts intellectual property protection in this area.

Research aimed at basic science could continue but anything that will have a practical application will be stopped until the Americans get the right to patent processes and products in the field of life sciences, medicine, environment and ecology. The Commerce Minister's assurances of all safeguards being secured, coming a day after the American statement, further erodes the government's battered credibility.

In order to counter criticism that it had failed to protect the rights of our farmers and scientists, government representatives rashly assert that India need not accept the existing *sui generis* system, that is, PBRs amended by the UPOV in 1991. The Commerce Ministry says that it has the right to frame its own *sui generis* system to suit India's needs. In that case there should be no problem at all.

Armed with this extraordinary flexibility that government claims to have, it has now no excuse not to incorporate at least those four or five conditions which are vital to the country's interests, into the *sui generis* system it devises. These would include unrestricted rights for our farmers and breeders to use genetic material. It would also include placing Farmers' Rights on par with Breeders' Rights, a condition acknowledged by the Food and Agriculture Organisation which has adopted a bill of "Farmers' Rights".

Farmers' Rights, not to be confused with the Farmers' Exemption allowed under PBRs, are the acknowledged rights of the farmers of the Third World who have carried the burden of creating, refining and maintaining the major portion of the genetic resources of the world.

Apart from including the Farmers' Rights into our *sui generis* system, the government will definitely have to include the condition that genetic resources like all other natural resources, as for example, copper, lead and oil, will have to be treated as national property and cannot continue to be had for free. They will have to be paid for like we have to pay for oil and copper that we obtain from other countries.

Finally, there will have to be a guarantee that genes stored in international gene banks cannot be protected by any system of intellectual property rights. This is because most of these genes have been collected from the fields of farmers in the Third World and will have to be considered their property.

The government would do well to realise that its primary duty is to the people of India whose interests it is bound to protect. This is not done by duping them with propaganda and half-truths. Even now, it can take them into confidence and involve them in taking what will undoubted be a hard decision. ■

Hindutva Propaganda on Family Planning

YOGINDER SIKAND and MANJARI KATJU

One of the central themes of the propaganda of the *Hindutva* brigade is the myth that the Muslims refuse to practise family planning as part of their alleged grand conspiracy to swamp the country and convert it into a Muslim-majority state. On the other hand, however, the saffron camp has consistently been exhorting the Hindus not to adopt population control measures and to produce as many children as they can. The politics of *Hindutva* is based on the creation and consolidation of an imagined Hindu community transcending internal class and caste contradictions. The bigger this vote-bank the better, and hence any measure to control population growth, except insofar as it affects the Muslims, is fiercely condemned by the self-proclaimed messiahs of Hinduism.

In his book, *The RSS Story*, the BJP Vice-President, K.R. Malkani, reveals:

> On the subject of artificial population control, Shri Guruji (Golwalkar, the RSS supremo) felt that there was no need for it.[1]

Malkani quotes Golwalkar as having further said:

> I for one think that the world is wide enough to house and feed all the children that are brought into it...[2]

Reactionaries readily read conspiracies into any move that might threaten their vested interests, and Golwalkar went on to discover the ubiquitous foreign hand behind family planning. He declared:

> Foreign powers are only too eager to see the Indian population cut. They know the strength of numbers and the connection between population and power.[3]

Perhaps here Golwalkar was dwelling on the connection he saw between a higher population of Hindus and the consequent possibility of greater political power for those who play politics in their name. He conveniently chose to ignore the fact that an excessively high population can only lead to the greater immiserisation of the poor and a dramatic loss of their physical, economic and political power.

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A population explosion would obviously prove disastrous for millions of poor, starving and unemployed people in India. Yet, the saffron camp exhorts Hindus to fiercely multiply, supremely unconcerned about the tragic consequences this would have for the poor. A larger population, by increasing competition among workers for scarce jobs, would result in a fall in wage levels, which would only benefit the richer classes among whom the fascist forces have their most ardent supporters. This is why many ideologues of *Hindutva* even go to the ludicrous extent of asserting that a higher population would solve, and not exacerbate, India's economic problems. Thus, for instance, Prof Subramaniam Swamy, writing in the RSS weekly, *Organiser* (November 13, 1971), came up with the absurd assertion that "population control would have very dangerous consequences for economic growth". He contended:

> The effect of any increase in population could be overcome by increased production for which there was great potential in the country.

He went on further to declare:

> Growth of knowledge was facilitated by large populations

and asked why

> if a certain number of people could bring about technological progress, a larger number could not bring about more progress?

Swamy added, without offering any substantiation whatsoever:

> Historical data suggested that the rate of growth of population and the rate of economic growth went together.

Similarly, a certain Kaka Bhushandi, writing in the *Organiser* (August 21, 1971), under the caption "Birth Control Has Ruined Many Countries", declared:

> The thesis that birth control is necessary to ensure sufficient food for the existing population in our country is questionable.

Swamy and Bhushandi, and numerous other advocates of the saffron cause, assert that a much higher population is the solution to many economic ills. These economic problems, however, are not those of the starving masses, but of the dominant classes, one of whose major concerns is to reduce wage levels as low as possible. A galloping population, as advocated by these saffron crusaders, would prove a boon for the rich and a disaster for the desparately poor.

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TO camouflage its ulterior political motive of increasing its vote-bank, the *Hindutva* brigade projects family planning as an anti-Hindu measure. Thus, the *Organiser* (May 4, 1974) reported that the Hindu Sammelan held by the *Hindu Raksha Dal* passed a resolution advising Hindus "not to fall prey to the family planning propaganda of the government..." Likewise, a certain M.W. Onkar, writing in the *Organiser* (November 18, 1990) lets his fertile imagination run wild when he declares:

> ...the government machinery compels the Hindu population to resort to family planning devices and undergo vasectomy and tubectomy operations.

In a similar vein, another hardcore *Hindutva* propagandist a certain Bishen Swaroop Goyal, has brought out a Hindi pamphlet with the title, *Family Planning is a Conspiracy Against Hindu Society*.[4] He asserts that only the well-off among the Hindus practise family planning because of which, he declares,

> Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and Parsis think that the Hindus are fools.[5]

He contends that the poor and backward social groups also are not favourably inclined towards population control. He declares:

> What is most painfully worrying is that because the nationalist intellectual classes (a euphemism for educated and better-off Hindus) are adopting family planning, they shall turn very soon into an even smaller minority.[6]

Since every issue on the basis of which the *Hindutva* brigade attempts to mobilise support is given a strong anti-Muslim colour, family planning, too, is projected by them as a pro-Muslim, anti-Hindu conspiracy. Hence, Goyal goes on to hurl the wild and utterly baseless accusation:

> The family planning programme has been introduced with the sole purpose of reducing Hindus into a minority. The world knows that wherever in India the Hindus became a minority, those areas were separated from the country. So, is it that family planning is being propagated solely to break-up India and thereby revive Muslim rule?[7]

A group of 'upper' caste Hindus from Gorakhpur have filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court (No. 15, 1993)[8] against the Union of India, praying for a ban on the Quran. Among other things, they have declared in their petition that

> It may be noted that Hinduism has not restricted Hindus to have one wife only. It is the sectarian Indian Parliament which has restricted the population growth of Hindus to meet her (*sic*) nefarious designs, viz. appease Mohamdens (*sic*) to grab Muslims' vote-banks and rob and slay Hindus...

These deranged fanatics then go on to declare that

> The one and only reason of the Hindus' survival is their population strength. The Indian Government and Constitution are colluding with Muslims to finish this barrier...

The *Hindutva* camp has consistently been propagating the hollow myth of Muslims multiplying at an alarming rate. It needs, however, to be noted that the Scheduled Castes and Tribes have, among the various communities, the highest rates of population growth, exceeding even that of the Muslims. Poverty and population growth are positively correlated. Thus, in the period 1971-81 the Muslim population grew by 30.59 per cent while that of the Dalits increased by 30.95 per cent and the tribals by 35.81 per cent. It is quite possible that soon the Dalits and tribals would also become the targets of attack of the *Hindutva* camp because of their fast increasing population.

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IT is a well-known fact that the core support-base of the *Hindutva* camp is among the 'upper' castes, particularly the Brahmins. Some analysts even go to the extent of asserting that the essential thrust of the saffron brigade is to defend and further strengthen Brahminism. Some of the leading spokesmen of the dominant sections of society advocate that the 'upper' castes should rapidly multiply or else they would have to face challenges to their hegemony from the backward caste masses. Thus, for instance, a news report entitled, "Brahmin Mahasangh Appeals to Each Brahmin to Produce Six Sons" in the Hindi daily, *Hindustan* (New Delhi, October 3, 1991), states:

> Anguished at the growing caste contradictions in society, the Brahmin Mahasangha has appealed to the Brahmins of the entire country to produce at least six sons each. The President of the Mahasangh, Vimal Dev Bharadwaj, has exhorted the Brahmins to send their sons to join the army, police, administrative services and trade.

Bharadwaj is reported to have gone on to add:

> India is the only country where opportunities for progress are available on the basis of caste and not merit. By giving 60 per cent reservations (*sic*) to the backward castes the government has enslaved the Brahmins.

As would be evident from this report, one of the means sought to perpetuate the Brahminical control over society and to deny the 'lower' castes their due is through advocating the increasing of the numerical strength of the 'upper castes'. Family planning is, therefore, denounced. There was no strong condemnation by the *Hindutvawadis* of this resolution of the Brahmin Mahasangha. Only the most naive and politically innocent will not be able to discover why.

The appeal of the Brahmin Mahasangha to the Brahmins to produce "six sons" each reflects the patriarchal discourse of the Brahminical chauvinists. Daughters are considered inferior and a burden and hence the appeal has been made only for sons. The serious ill-effects on the health of a woman as a result of producing numerous children are considered to be of no cause for concern for those who vehemently denounce family planning. Implicit in the demand for inordinately large families is the belief that the sole duty of women is to produce children, remaining confined within the four walls of the house.

The propaganda offensive unleashed by the saffron brigade against the Muslims, a major component of which is the myth of their refusal to practise family planning, has undoubtedly succeeded in poisoning many innocent and gullible minds. On the other hand, the appeal of the *Hindutva* camp to the Hindus to multiply and reproduce unchecked and not practise family planning would, if acted upon, have very serious negative consequences for women, the backward communities and the poor. The patriarchal and dominant sections of society alone stand to gain from this venomous propaganda. A Hindu population explosion might gladden the hearts of the votaries of *Hindutva*, but would prove disastrous for the masses of this country, about whom the self-proclaimed messiahs of Hinduism are supremely unconcerned. ■

Notes

1. K.R. Malkani, *The RSS Story* (Impex India, New Delhi, 1980), p. 74.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
4. Bishen Swaroop Goyal, *Parivar Niyojan Hindu Samaj Ke Virudh Shadyantra* (Vikalp Prakashan, New Delhi, n.d.)
5. *Ibid.*, p.1.
6. *Ibid.*, p.2.
7. *Ibid.*, p.2.
8. Writ petition No. 15 of 1993—A.P. Tripathi, R.C. Agarwal, R.P. Gupta and I.L. Shrivastava versus Union of India.

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The Summer of Protest

BHARAT DOGRA

The women of Pathera village in Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh have spent almost the entire summer protesting against the liquor shop in their village. On June 22 when this reporter went to attend a protest meeting against the administration's obstinacy in not removing the liquor vend, the *dharna* (sit-in) of the villagers against the liquor had completed 85 days. The day and night *dharna* for such a long time, specially in the hot afternoon sun had taken its toll on the health of several people and three children have died largely as a result of the excessive exposure to the heat wave. But all this suffering, social activists of the area say with despair and anger, has had no impact on the administration which has actually moved away from the earlier accommodative attitude to turn increasingly hostile towards the movement.

The destructive story of the liquor vend started nearly three years ago when a liquor shop was set up right in the heart of the village at a busy site. The location spot near the bus stop as well as religious places violated all norms and several people in the village voiced their distress at the advent of this uninvited guest.

The misgiving of the villagers proved to be quite justified. There was a big spurt in the consumption of liquor. Men who earlier purchased only an occasional bottle of liquor when they went to the city now could not resist the temptation of buying liquor as often as possible. As the addiction grew, they were willing to forego the essential expenditure on food, medicines and school books in order to be able to buy liquor.

What is even worse, the liquor habit started spreading rapidly to school-children. First, they stole a little liquor for the drinks of adults out of curiosity, but once they got addicted, they even stole money from their homes or from shopkeepers to be able to buy liquor.

As the village streets became full of drunk people strolling around aimlessly, it turned increasingly difficult for village women to go about their tasks safely. Cases of eve-teasing and harassment of women increased. At home cases of beating up wives and children multiplied severalfold.

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IT was in this distressing situation that villagers started getting together to remove the liquor shop from their village. Voluntary agencies like Disha located in a nearby village extended full help in mobilising the anti-liquor campaign.

District officials and higher authorities were contacted to inform them about the very widespread feelings in the village against the liquor vend. Initially the authorities agreed that the liquor vend will be removed elsewhere at the time of the next auction. The villagers promptly repeated their pleas before the next auction but to their distress, the liquor vend in their village was continued.

Finally the villagers decided in the last week of March to start a protest *dharna* against the liquor vend. While they were able to stop the liquor sales directly made from the main shop, the contractor persisted in his efforts to sell liquor through other channels. What is more, the administration now adopted a very hostile attitude towards the anti-liquor movement. A false report was allegedly sent by the local administration to the higher authorities that if this shop is removed, this will lead to an increase in liquor smuggling from another shop at Haryana which is located at a distance of only two kilometres. Actually the distance of this shop is much more and smuggling from there is not so likely, specially as the villagers have decided to continue their campaign against liquor even after the removal of the vend so that more and more people can be persuaded to give up the bottle.

The general principle in such a situation should be that wherever a village community has given clear and firm demonstrations of its opposition to the location of a liquor shop in their village, the village vend should be removed promptly or at least at the end of the year. In the present case the opposition of the village community against the liquor shop has been clearly seen for well over a year. Therefore, the liquor shop of Pathera village should be removed without further delay. ■

Islam and Family Planning

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER

New issues keep on emerging in a continually changing society. Religion, if it is more than a set of rituals and prayers, and it wants to stay relevant to these issues, must respond creatively to these issues. Otherwise religion would be nothing more than a set of rituals and dogmas, relevant or irrelevant. This, however, does not mean in the least that religion should become a plaything in the hands of those who want to bring certain changes in keeping with their own personal desires. Changes too cannot be arbitrary. They must be based on certain positive fundamental principles and values. Any change which violates these principles and values cannot be accepted.

The holy Prophet of Islam was well aware of the changes which keep on taking place in society. He was also aware of the fact that what is good in one place may be problematic in another. Yemen was a short distance from Medina and there was also interaction between the two societies and yet when the Prophet appointed his companion, Ma'adh bin Jabal, as the Governor of that region he asked him what will he do if he was confronted with a problem which was not dealt with in the Quran and the *sunna*. The Prophet approved of it when Ma'adh said that he will resort to *ijtihad* (exerting one's mind or taking recourse to creative interpretation of the principles and values laid down by the Quran and the *sunna*). Thus, it will be seen that *ijtihad* is a very important instrument of reapplying Islamic principles and values in the changed situation. In fact, it is an instrument of the inner-dynamics of Islam.

Sweeping changes have taken place in human society in the last two centuries. Human knowledge in non-religious spheres like physical and social sciences have made great strides. Our social paradigm has changed radically in many respects. New questions as well as problems have arisen and these need to be tackled. We cannot give the same answers to the old questions in the changed circumstances. The religious principles and values will have to be creatively applied in the light of our experiences and in our context. The problem of family planning is not entirely new as its need was felt in the earlier societies in some way or the other. However today, in our context, it has not remained merely a matter of individual need and choice but acquired a social significance. The society as a whole has to think about it and adopt a collective policy. In this respect, this problem has to be rethought in a creative way.

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II

Religion and Family Planning

Does any religion oppose family planning, and if so, why? The basic ground on which family planning is opposed by any religion is sanctity of life. Catholic Christians also oppose it on this ground. The second possible ground to oppose it is that God provides for all those who are born. It is God's own responsibility to feed His creatures. Human beings should not intervene in God's affairs. We shall deal with both these objections in what follows in this section.

As for the first question that family planning violates life's sanctity, it will be seen that this objection is more superficial than real. The question of violating life's sanctity can arise only when there is an attempt to kill a living being. To bring life into existence in a planned way or to put restrictions on life being born is basically, different from killing or eliminating existing life in any other possible way. In the former case, no killing is involved at all; it involves only temporary, quasi-permanent or permanent prevention of life being born. It is not the same thing as killing a life. One cannot kill a non-existent being. One will also have to make a distinction between contraception and abortion. One can—and should—take objection in case of abortion on ethical grounds, particularly in the advanced stage when life has begun.

It is, of course, debatable whether abortion should be opposed in the absolute sense or in a relative sense. Should abortion be absolutely banned whatever the context or condition or should it be banned in certain conditions only?

There can be different opinions. Does life begin immediately with the fertilisation of the ovum or at a later stage? The Catholic Church maintains that once conception takes place, life begins (God has created life in the womb) and hence abortion cannot be permitted. Islamic scholars and theologians, on the other hand, believe, as we shall see further, life begins in the fourth month of conception and abortion before that cannot be objectionable or unethical. Of course, it must be admitted that the differences are deep and unresolvable. No wonder then that even in the USA there are fundamental differences on this question between the pro-choice and pro-life people. The former argue that the mother who bears the entire brunt of giving birth to the child and sub-sequently to rear it, should have a choice in the matter to retain or to abort the foetus. The mother's choice, from this perspective, is more important than anything else.

The pro-life people, on the other hand, argue that sanctity of life is more fundamental than anything else. Sanctity of life should precede all other considerations, including perhaps mother's and child's health. I do not know what their attitude will be when not just the mother's health but life itself is in imminent danger if the foetus is not aborted. The Supreme Court of the USA, of course, has upheld its previous judgement favouring choice. But there is a great deal of clamour in the USA on this issue and it acquired overtones of an electoral issue too. President Bush, who sought re-election for a second term, faced a dilemma. In South Ireland too, where the Catholics are in a majority, abortion continues to be a highly controversial issue. Recently when a girl was raped and conceived she was not allowed by the government of her country to go for abortion to London. Then the Court had to intervene and allow her to go as a special case.

Thus, it will be seen that it is not an easy question to resolve. If attitudes are so hard on this question in the developed world, one can imagine what will happen if religion is allowed a free play in vetoing family planning in underdeveloped countries like India, where the orthodoxy has much greater grip on the minds and hearts of the people. Also, poverty and illiteracy, apart from lack of consciousness, become powerful blocks. We will throw some light on these aspects as well in the coming pages.

There is one more question involved in practicing birth control if seen from the religious perspective. It is not only the question of sanctity of life, but also that of sexual ethics. Sans procreation will not sexual intercourse become merely a means of pleasure? According to the orthodox position, sex cannot be permitted sans its purpose. It is again an ethical question and one can hardly find complete agreement on it. I think sex can be permitted sans procreation within wedlock. After all, one does not ban sex even if it is found after marriage that one of the conjugal partners lacks fertility. Also, one cannot ban sex past the age of fertility. Then again, sexual intercourse does not stop soon after conception. It continues for few months thereafter. Had sex been meant strictly for procreation, one will have to evolve a new marital code for sexual activities within wedlock. Another question will also have to be answered, namely, procreation outside wedlock. Will it be permitted if sexual intercourse is used strictly for procreation but outside wedlock? Obviously not. Thus, this clearly shows that the position that sexual activities are meant strictly for procreation is rather untenable. Within wedlock sex will have to be permitted for pleasure too. Even the Church has permitted the cycle-method of birth control (that is, resorting to sexual intercourse during those periods when conception is unlikely to take place) which means sex sans procreation can be permitted.

Also while discussing this question, we have to bear in mind that we are not discussing exceptional cases wherein some strict control over sexual activity as pleasure is imposed. We are discussing, keeping the average person in mind. Thus, it will be seen that sexual intercourse for its own sake could be permitted within the limits of marriage. No religion should object to it and this is a key element in the practice of birth control. Sexual activity with one's conjugal partner should be permitted sans the objective of procreation with an easy conscience. If these questions are resolved within the framework of one's religion, a major obstacle is overcome. But as pointed out above, the question of family planning or birth control is no more merely a question of individual choice. It is a pressing urgency for the society as a whole and hence a collective decision with free consent (that is, absence of any coercive measure) is needed. Creative reinterpretation of religious principles may greatly help in achieving this objective.

Yet another religious dilemma with have to be overcome. Orthodox religious belief, as pointed out above, requires non-intervention of any human agency in God's affairs. Creation of life and to sustain it through proper provision is God's responsibility and no human being should prevent the birth of a life for fear of lack of provision and starvation. This again is not a very tenable position. God has made many things available to us including all the natural resources. He has also endowed humans with intelligence and has provided them with divine guidance.

They have to utilise these resources with intelligence and in a planned manner so that those are available to all on an equitable basis. It applies not only to the present but also the future generations. This can be done only if the human population is properly planned. The resources, as most eminent scientists have pointed out, are not inexhaustible. They must, therefore, be intelligently utilised. If this is not done, starvation might result. Thus, divine plans can work through human agency and it is human responsibility to utilise natural resources in a planned manner. For planned utilisation, the number of human beings will also have to be controlled on earth at any given time. Starvation might result on account human folly. God or nature—whatever one chooses to call it—cannot be blamed for it. Procreation is a natural process but it can be controlled in a given context in the light of divine guidance which reaches human beings through God's chosen agents. It will result in the satisfaction of human needs in a just and equitable manner. Hence it is not correct to say that human intervention is undesirable. God's desire could be fulfilled through human agents above. Uncontrolled human population might result in starvation of God's creatures. Some Muslim Ulama have taken this position as we shall see in what follows.

III

Islam and Family Planning

A section of orthodox Ulama today is putting forward arguments against family planning on the lines described above. Some of them base their case in certain verses from the holy Quran. There are two verses which prohibit slaying one's children—6:152 and 17:31. Both are almost similar. The verse 17:31 says:

> And kill not your children for fear of poverty—We provide for them and for you. Surely, killing of them is a great wrong.

All the commentators of the Quran agree that the above verse refers to killing female infants immediately after birth for fear of starvation and social ignominy as in the desert females were not considered strong enough to struggle for survival. The holy Quran has strongly condemned the pre-Islamic practice of female infanticide among the Arabs. On the other hand, the male children were highly valued. The Arabs used to be very proud of possessing numerous male children.

Many ill-informed *Mullas* quote the above verse and other similar verses to argue that Allah has condemned killing children for fear of starvation. There is no question of killing anyone or taking life in any other way for fear of starvation. No ethical or moral conduct would approve of it. The Quranic ethics in fact condemn killing of any one person as amountng to killing the entire humanity. And it is in that spirit that the Quran strongly disapproves of burying daughters alive.

> And when buried alive, it asked for what sin she was killed.

Similarly, the verse 6:152 and 17:31 also refer to this practice of female infanticide and urge upon the Arabs not to kill their daughters for fear of poverty as Allah will provide for them and for their children—male or female. Thus, these verses must be seen in that context. It would obviously be wrong to infer from them that spacing of children and limiting them—that is what family planning is all about—is prohibited. Moreover, these verses specifically prohibit *killing of children,* that is, those already born and not those who do not yet exist or are even conceived. Contraception cannot be equated with killing of those already born. It was most humane on the part of the Quran to admonish those who killed their children already born for fear of poverty. No civilised person would stand such cruelty to children.

Imam Shafe'i, one of the great Imams who found the Shafe'i school of Islamic jurisprudence, thinks that one should not produce more children, if he cannot support them properly. He bases his opinion on one of the verses of the Quran relating to polygamy. It is verse 4:3, that is, the verse on the chapter on women (*Al-Nisa*). In this verse the Quran, while permitting Muslims to marry upto four wives in certain conditions, exhorts them to marry only one if they cannot meet the ends of justice and then ends with the words (as generally translated):

> This is more proper that you may not do injustice

However, Imam Shafe'i insists that it should be translated as:

> This is more proper that you do not produce more children.

The Quranic words which are being differently translated *Allah ta ulu* which can mean both, that is, not to do injustice and not to multiply children. As far as our subject is concerned, Imam Shafe'i's rendering is more relevant. The Imam's argument is that producing more children would make it difficult to provide them with what is *halal* (that is, legitimate and permissible) and also would make it difficult for parents to observe *hudud Allah* [limits prescribed by God, See *Zamakhsahri, Al-Kash shaf,* Vol. I (Beirut, 1977), pp. 497-98]

Imam Shafe'i was man of vision and he could well anticipate the problems of producing more children. He makes a very important point, namely, that the Quran lays stress on the legitimate ways of earning one's living (*Halalan Tavviba*). One should not resort to ways of earning not permitted by Allah and Imam Shafe'i feels that if one produces more children, he will ultimately in order to feed them, resort to *haram* (prohibited) ways of earning. Thus, producing more children would ultimately amount to earning the wrath of God.

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HOWEVER, it is heartening to note that Imam Shafe'i was not alone in thinking this way which favours limiting one's family. There were other eminent Islamic thinkers who thought alike. Imam Raghib, a great lexicographer of Quran, thought on the same lines. Referring to the killing of children in verses 17:31, he maintains that killing in this verse does not necessarily mean putting one's children to death; killing here in fact means not giving them proper education. Ignorance, according to him, is intellectual death which is worse than physical death. Since the word *aulad* (children) includes both male and female, this explanation of the word killing (*qatl*) is more plausible. Hence, one should not keep one's children ignorant and kill them in the intellectual and spiritual sense. It can also result in malnutrition and retardation. Since having a large family too can result in all this, it is wise to plan one's family and limit it. Though Imam Raghib does not put it that way, one can easily draw that implication from what he says about the intellectual death of one's children. It would thus be seen that both eminent Islamic thinkers, Imam Shafe'i as well as Imam Raghib, favour a small family, so as to provide it with the proper means of material as well as spiritual development.

The *hadith* literature too supports birth control both in direct and indirect ways. One *hadith* says:

> Those few (*qalil*) who are virtuous are superior to those many (*kathir*) who are undesirable.

The implication of this *hadith* is obvious. It favours a small number of people who have better opportunities of moral and ethical development. Allama M.H. Alvi has also quoted this *hadith* in support of family planning. There is also a famous *hadith* which makes acquisition of knowledge compulsory for all Muslims—males as well as females. The word *faridat* (obligatory) is very important in this *hadith*. This is further reinforced by yet another *hadith* which says:

> acquire knowledge even if it is available in China (China was considered farthest from Arabia in those days).

Both these traditions make it clear that it is obligatory for Muslims to give education to themselves and to their children even if they have to travel to far-off places. But if means are limited and the family is large, Muslims cannot fulfil this important obligation. Thus, their Muslimness will remain incomplete. It is, therefore, inevitable for them to keep the size of their families small, if they want to give the best possible education to their children. It is a pity that these important traditions of the Prophet are not being focussed upon by theologians. Of course, some theologians maintain that by *ilm* (knowledge) in this tradition is meant the knowledge of Islam and not other wordly knowledge. Firstly, there is no available evidence to corroborate this point of view. The word *ilm* in Arabic has very wide connotation and embraces all varieties of knowledge, religious as well as wordly, physical as well as moral and spiritual. The Prophet is asking Muslims to go even to China for acquiring knowledge and China obviously was not the centre of Islamic knowledge. Thus, from this context it is clear that the Prophet meant wordly knowledge as well. But even if it is confined to religious knowledge, it would not be possible for parents to give higher Islamic knowledge to their children, if they are too many. *Ilm,* it must be noted, implies moral and spiritual development also and it is not possible to impart higher knowledge and ensure spiritual and moral development if there are too many children.

Apart from the indirect support for a small family from the Prophet's traditions, there are many traditions which lend direct support. Thus Imam Ghazzali, a Muslim theologian, philosopher and Sufi of great eminence, mentions a tradition from the Prophet which says:

> Smallness of a family (*qillat al'ayal*) is a facility (*vusur*) and its largeness (*kathrat*) results in *faqr* (indigence, poverty).

This *hadith* needs no comment. The holy Prophet is clearly exhorting Muslims to have a small family as it would ensure more easiness and facility in life and avoid large family as it would lead to indigence and poverty. The Prophet is also reported to have said that the best of people (*khayar al-nas*) is one who has less burden of children on his back (*khafif al-zahr min al-ayal*). On being asked what he meant by *khafif al-zahr* (light backed), he clarified that one who has a small number of children. This tradition also hardly needs any comment and is directly in support of a small planned family.

'Azl in Arabic literally means removal or dismissal or separation and is also translated as *coitus interruptus*. But it need not mean only *coitus interruptus*. It includes all forms of birth control. We find *'azl* being mentioned in a large number of *ahadith* (traditions). Hazrat Jabir, a noted companion of the Prophet, says that (i) we used to have recourse to birth control—*'azl*—during the days of the Prophet, while the Quran was being revealed; (ii) we used to take recourse to it in the Prophet's age. He came to know of it but did not prevent us from doing so. If it were something to be prevented, the Quran would have prohibited it. (The Quran prohibited expressly many evil practices prevalent in the Arabia during the lifetime of the Prophet.) The above tradition of *'azl* has been reported in two authentic collections of *hadith, Sahih Bukhari* and *Muslim*.

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There are many other traditions which favourably mention *'azl* indicating that it was generally practiced during the holy Prophet's time for maintaining small families. However, it must be mentioned that there are also some traditions narrated by the Prophet's companions like Ibn Mas'ud, 'Abd Allah bin 'Abbas which prohibit birth control. However, these traditions have been rejected by equally eminent Islamic savants like 'Allama Ibn Qayyim al-Jauzi who maintain that the traditions narrated by Ibn Mas'ud and 'Abd Allah bin' Abbas prohibiting birth control are few and far between and there are a large number of traditions favouring birth control. In fact, another companion of the Prophet, Abu Sa'id Khudri, has narrated a tradition as follows:

> A Jew told me that *'azl* amounts to burying alive on a smaller scale *wad khafif*. I then came to the holy Prophet, peace be on him, and told him what the Jew said. The Prophet then said twice: the Jew lied, the Jew lied.

If true, this *hadith* clearly estblishes that the Prophet never banned or disapproved birth control (*'azl*). In fact, in tradition support for *'azl* is very strong and Ibn Mas'ud's veiw that *'azl* (birth control) is *wad khafif* (burying alive on smaller degree) hardly finds any support in the entire *hadith* literature. Imam Tahavi, an eminent jurist, also support Sa'id al-Khurdi's tradition in which the Prophet is reported to have said that the Jew who said birth control amounts to burying alive on a smaller scale was lying. Thus one can safely assume that *'azl* (*coitus interruptus*) or any other form of birth control is permitted in Islam.

No eminent Islamic thinker, theologian or jurist has raised any objection to plan one's family or practice birth control. All the four founders of Islamic schools of jurisprudence—Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Malik, Imam Ibn Hanbal and Imam Shafe'i—have either directly or indirectly approved of it. We have already discussed what Imam Shafe'i has to say about it. Another widely accepted Imam is Imam Abu Hanifa who is largely followed by the Muslims in India. Imam Abu Hanifa is said to have written to one of his most eminent disciples, Qadi Abu Yusuf:

> No doubt, excess of children creates great worries

This caution is contained in the series of directives the Imam sent to Abu Yusuf. He also wrote to him that he should not marry till he was capable of supporting his wife. The great Hanafi work on Islamic Law, *Hidaya*, also says:

> In the opinion of Abu Hanifa, birth control is permissible

The two disciples of Abu Hanifa, Qadi Abu Yusuf and Imam Shaybani, also held that birth control was permissible. But both thought that the wife's permission was necessary and, according to them, Imam Abu Hanifa also thought so. In fact, this is much more desirable. The prospective mother must be consulted about the desirability of having a child or not.

Imam Ghazzali in his magnum opus, *Ihya al-'Ulum*, gives four grounds for *'azl*, namely, (1) presenvention of wife's beauty and charm; (2) protection of her life and health; (3) apprehension of great deal of hardship (*kathrat al-harad*) on account of more children; and (4) financial hardship and shortage of income. It would thus be seen that Imam Ghazzali permits *'azl* even to preserve woman's beauty and charm—a very liberal ground indeed. Other grounds are what usually make birth control necessary for a family.

So far have we have discussed the Sunni tradition. The Shi'a tradition too raises no objection or even specifically permits birth control.

The great founder of the Shi'a *figh* (jurisprudence) Imam Ja'afar al-Sadiq has said that a "small family is a bliss". Moreover, Hazrat Ali, whom the Prophet described as the "gate to the city of knowledge", held that not only birth control is permissible, but one can resort to abortion before life begins in the womb of the mother. He based his opinion on the following Quranic verses:

> And certainly, we create man of an extract of clay, then we make him a small life-germ in a firm resting place. Then we make the life-germ a clot, then we make the clot a lump of flesh, then we make (in) the lump of flesh bones, then we clothe the bones with flesh, then we cause it to grow into another creation. So blessed be Allah, the Best of Creators. (23:12-14)

Thus, Hazrat Ali concluded from the above verses that the moment *nutfah* (life-germ) is placed in the mother's womb life does not begin. It begins only when the life-germ has passed through all the stages described above and enters the phase—"then we cause it to grow into another creation"—which, according to some, may happen in the fourth month and abortion before life is created could be permissible as it would not, until then, amount to burying alive.

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IT will, therefore, be seen that almost all Islamic traditions permit *'azl* with or without permission of the wife. Sexual intercourse within marital bond is permited in Islam even if its the intention is not to procreate. It is not morally objectionable as in some religious traditions. Of course, in no case, the intention should be to transcend the Allah's bounds through excessive indulgence. It is for this reason that the Islamic world took up the family planning campaign without moral compunctions. In Egypt, government propaganda emphasises *usrah saghirah* (small family) and in Pakistan too one sees the slogan *chhota khandan khushhal khandan* (small family, happy family). Many prominent contemporary *ulama* have also issued *fatwas* in favour of birth control. Maulana Saeed Ahmad Akbarabadi, a noted Indian theologian, maintains that the purpose of marriage in Islam is not only to satisfy sexual impulse, but also multiplication of and contribution to the maintenance and growth of human population. Therefore, resort to birth control cannot be permitted arbitrarily. But Islam can hardly be expected to shut its eyes to hard facts of life. Though birth control is not permissible without genuine reason, but where there is a genuine reason calling for such a step, it may be regarded not merely permissible but even compulsory. (See Tahir Mehmood, ed. *Law in Modern India*, 1972, pp. 114-122)

Thus, from whatever angle it is seen, birth control or family planning is not objectionable in Islam provided the purpose is moral and for the benefit of human society as a whole. In certain conditions, collective certainly precedes individual interest. Imam Taymiyyah, a great medieval Islamic thinker and jurist, has also propounded this doctrine. When unrestrained growth of human population causes severe problems in society, it would certainly be permissible to take suitable steps to bring human population under control. Today in India as well as several other countries, population control has acquired great urgency. If stern steps are not taken, the society as a whole will suffer not only materially, but also morally and spiritually. As Maulana Saeed Ahmad Aakbarabadi maintains, in such conditions, family planning is not only permissible, but should be made compulsory.

Earlier, we had referred to the doctrine of *ijtihad* (exerting to creatively apply Islamic principles and values in a new situation). A situation has developed in our country wherein a small family norm is a must. In this situation, the fundamental principle of Islam, that is, moral development and acquisition of knowledge, should be creatively applied. If through unrestricted growth of population, moral development of human beings is endangered, steps must be taken, through family planning, if necessary, to ensure that. According to Islam, moral development and observation of *hudud Allah* is more fundamental than unrestricted growth of human population. And, if unrestricted growth of population endangers moral development, the latter will have precedence over the former.

There can be misuse of contraceptive devices. They may be used for preventing conception in extra-martial relationship. But then anything—even the noblest, like religion—can be misused. Society has to evolve checks and balances to prevent misuse of these contraceptives. It is certainly not contraceptives which lead to sexual immorality. Sexual immorality would be found even sans these devices. This immorality needs to be contained on its own grounds. And it is only through strict sexual morality that one can ensure woman's dignity and upholding woman's dignity is fundamental to the teachings of Islam. ■

BOOK REVIEW

Bluestar : The Unanswered Questions

PREM SINGH

The 'Operation Bluestar' undertaken by the Indian Army in early June 1984 has been extensively reported and commented upon. What is of special interest in this book is that it has been written by the author and commander of that highly sensitive military action. Nine years after the event when terrorism seems to have been contained and secessionist rhetoric is largely subdued in Punjab, the appearance of this account has evoked considerable interest, particularly because the author on his own admission, has aimed at "exploding" certain "myths", "half-truths" and "falsehoods" widely spread about this episode. The interest is further underscored by the fact that not only sections of Sikhs continue to express doubts about the desirability of mounting a major military attack on the holiest of their shrines, even the non-Sikh public opinion is not entirely convinced that 'Operation Bluestar' was the only option with the Government of Mrs Indira Gandhi in those circumstances.

Operation Bluestar—The True Story by Lt. General K.S. Brar; UBS Publishers' Distributors Ltd.; pp. 173; Rs 150.

The author has generally confined his narrative, as he admits, to the "precincts of soldiering, rather than dabbling in politics". (p. 12) He was handed down a brief by his superiors on behalf of the Government of India, namely, the elimination of the threat posed to the security of the country by terrorists occupying the Golden Temple complex and he did his best to discharge the task assigned to him. Giving a background of the secessionist threat, the author has brought out in minute detail the elaborate preparations, unreported so far, and the actual battle engagements of the Indian Army units for gaining control of the vast temple complex. As is well-known, the Army while facing heavy fire from militants was itself seriously handicapped due to the orders that they were not to fire in the direction of the *sanctum sanctorum* and that minimum damage was to be caused to the buildings. Brar has recorded that in the conditions of a raging battle in the foreground of the Akal Takht, the Army failed to make any headway and the repeated attempts by elite troops to secure a lodgement in the area misfired. The tanks could not perform even the limited function of temporarily blinding the terrorists because their headlight bulbs fused too soon. An APC was knocked out by an unexpected anti-tank missile. The gas canisters proved ineffective because they bounced back from the marble walls of the Akal Takht. It was only after it appeared to General Brar and his seniors that the Akal Takht could not be captured without the use of heavy guns that the same were used.

Brar has paid rich tributes to the soldiers and officers who faced the main brunt of what in every respect was a cruel battle. As a commander his preparedness to face losses and his promptness in regrouping and redeploying the resources at his disposal, his success in keeping his forces strictly under control and his use of superior fire-power as a last resort are commendable. But his brilliance as a commander does not help him to answer all the questions which he himself has posed, though the book admittedly has been written to answer these very questions.

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ONE of the important questions, raised widely and mentioned prominently by Brar, is: why did not the Army lay a siege around the temple and starve the inmates, thereby forcing them to surrender? Brar's argument against the siege—even a short one—is that it would possibly have led to a mass uprising before the temple could be cleared of the terrorists. Writes he: "What could the Army have done, if a sea of humanity armed with spears, swords, and fire-arms had followed" Bhindranwale's instruction "to converge from all directions on Amritsar"? (p. 66) And how could we ignore the eventuality that a "human wave of religiously incited followers would literally have come down like a mighty flood and trapped the troops in the cordon from

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both ends"? (p. 67)

This in fact is the crux of the "True Story". Surprisingly, Brar has given no evidence of a developing mass uprising. Reports of resentment among Sikhs leading to attempts at gatherings, of which he has given no details, were obviously well taken care of by the Army which was deployed throughout Punjab. The scenario of mass uprising which General Brar ascribes to General Sundarji and with which he expresses his own agreement, is in fact a hypothetical scenario and is based on a wrong reading of the situation. A correct assessment of the mood of the Sikh masses in that period is the key to making a judgement on the 'Bluestar Operation'. Brar and his colleagues were certainly mistaken if they thought that Punjab was on the threshold of a Sikh uprising. The error of judgement is also reflected in what Brar thought was the standing of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale among all sections of Sikhs. According to him, in Bhindranwale, the Sikhs "had a towering, prophet-like personality, at least in appearance and charisma" (p. 6) and "many Sikhs, including the intelligentsia, even began to venerate him as their eleventh Guru". (p. 23) This is certainly wide off the mark though it is true that he was running a sort of parallel government in Punjab. There is, however, nothing to suggest that masses of Sikhs were responding to his calls. Despite all the support that certain Congress leaders gave him and despite the Akali leaders' attempts to keep him in good humour, his main constituency at best was a section of pro-Akali Sikhs and his strength lay in the atmosphere of terror that he was able to build. It has to be noted that the cult of hatred that Sant Bhindranwale had been preaching for well over three years did not result in any communal clash among Hindus and Sikhs, though the venomous propaganda did create a certain polarisation.

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THE speed with which the operation was conducted and which did account for the high rate of Army casualities, was in any case a compulsion, irrespective of a possible uprising. Having made the entry, the Army could not have proceeded leisurely. But the author has given no convincing answer to his own question as to why the operation was timed for June 5, two days after the Martyrdom Day of Guru Arjun, when a large number of pilgrims had come and many of them were bound to be there when the operation began. The author has argued that it was the Akali leadership which precipitated matters by announcing that a Statewide morcha would be started on June 3, with stopping of movement of grain in the State. This, according to the author, left Mrs Indira Gandhi with no other option except to order the Army to clear the Golden Temple complex of the terrorists. In fact by early 1984 the Longowal-Tohra Akali leadership had been paralysed as a result of the terror spread by Bhindranwale's hit squads. And though the Central Government was still negotiating with them, by the time the 'Operation Bluestar' was ordered the government knew that the Akali leaders had been marginalised. In fact their political paralysis and not their call for the June 3 morcha, which otherwise would have exposed their isolation, made the government act the way it did.

The author has expressed surprise as to why Bhindrnawale was not arrested before he entered the Akal Takht and why the government failed to act when the Golden Temple complex was gradually being built into a strong fortification. And though he very nearly accuses the government of negligence, he scrupulously avoids mentioning Mrs Indira Gandhi in this context. His lament about the "patently selfish political chicanery" (p. 2) of politicians both at the Centre and of the State and his regret about the application of "money, murder, muscle and media" which has polluted Indian political horizons", would have been more convincing if he had also mentioned that it was none else but Mrs Gandhi herself who had been encouraging moves for an understanding between the government and Bhindranwale. She was no less keen to keep the protagonist of Khalistan in good humour. In April 1984, a few weeks before 'Bluestar' the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had called him a "saint" who possibly had no political ambitions. And certainly all administrative softness towards him was a part of the same strategy of conciliating him.

While the author has noted that Giani Zail Singh when he visited the temple on June 8, appeared "disinterested" to the tragedy of the Army having lost so many precious lives, it would have been of immense interest to know what the author thought of the widespread view that the President of India had not been consulted and that he was only informed about the impending Army action. It is also surprising that the General has very little to say about Pakistani involvement with the secessionists which fact was also one of the reasons for the 'Operation Bluestar'. ■

TRIBUTE

Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya

Prof Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, one of the most distinguished Marxist philosophers of the country, passed away in Calcutta on May 8, 1993. We are publishing the following tributes in homage to his memory. The first is a letter sent by S.G. Sardesai, the veteran Marxist ideologue and a founder of the communist movement in India, to Debiprasad's wife, Dr (Mrs) Alaka Chattopadhyaya, former Principal of Vidyasagar College for Women, Calcutta, on learning of her bereavement. And the second is an article on Debiprasad by Dr Suman Gupta, Professor of Philosophy, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. —Editor

He fought the Dead Weight of Indian Idealism

S.G. SARDESAI

Dear Alaka,

Sunday's paper brought the shocking and painful news that Debiprasad is no more.

I feel grieved and forlorn beyond words. He was a friend and comrade whose loss has created a void which cannot be filled. Not only my condolence but all my feelings are with you and your daughters in your bereavement. I am confident that you will face the situation with courage.

He made a pioneering, courageous contribution to Indian philosophy which will endure. Almost single-handed he fought the dead weight of Indian idealism which still dominates our universities and intellectuals. But for him the rich heritage of Indian materialism would have remained in ancient Sanskrit texts in complete oblivion. Our academic world not only did not recognise the value of his contribution but always tried to kill it with a conspiracy of silence. All credit goes to him that he never worried about prestige and publicity, and carried on his work tirelessly till the end.

I am now eightysix, ailing and mostly in bed. But I continue to read and study as much as I can and, though now rarely, also to write.

With rare exceptions the colleagues, comrades and friends of my generation have departed. I continue to linger, I do not know why. But such is life and one has to keep on struggling till the end.

Debiprasad was a model in this respect also.

Please accept my love and heartfelt regards. Also give my love to your daughters.

Yours sincerely,
S.G. Sardesai

May 11, 1993
P.O. Talegaon General Hospital
District Pune (Pin: 410 507)

JUST RELEASED

SAMPRADAIKTA KE SROT
(Sources of Communalism)

This is a compilation of twelve articles written by distinguished scholars and activists to understand the real sources of growth of communalism in India. Edited by **Abhay Kumar Dubey,** this anthology looks into the relationship of communal tendencies with religion, education, science, history, culture and politics. It includes articles by various scholars like Gyanendra Pandey, Krishna Kumar, Rajni Kothari, Sumit Sarkar, D.L. Sheth, Tanika Sarkar, Vir Bharat Talwar, A. Rehman and others. For the first time, such a collection of important articles is available in Hindi.

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Profound Loss to the World of Philosophy

SUMAN GUPTA

With the sad demise of Professor Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya on May 8, 1993 a vacuum has been created in the world of philosophy. As a Marxist philosopher and indologist, Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, for the first time, coherently and systematically related Indian philosophy with Indian reality. He is one of the very few interpreters of ancient philosophy who attempted to show the connection between the way people procured their means of livelihood and the ideas prevalent in a particular historical epoch. He, in conformity with the Marxist approach, viewed the world of ideas and the objective reality not as consisting of isolated and static units but as a dialectically interacting whole composed of opposite forces which is constantly undergoing change and development.

Thus, unlike the traditional idealist philosophers who looked at philosophical ideas divorced from the material life of the people, Chattopadhyaya analysed the material foundations of these ideas and showed that the change in the material life of the people also ultimately leads to a change in their ideas. But he equally stressed the fact that the ideas, in their turn, influence the real life of the people. That is, they may help or hinder the development of the society. In accordance with Marxist methodology Chattopadhyaya also provided us with an in-depth analysis of the material foundations of idealism. He maintained that everything in the universe—inclusive of ideas—is constantly changing. He studied the ancient Indian philosophical thought, both materialist and idealist—including the nine schools of Philosophy—in terms of their origin and development. And it is this fact which distinguishes his approach from the traditional idealists who, by divorcing ideas from their material foundations, view them as static and thus their interpretation of the ancient Indian philosophical thought fails to reflect the essential characteristics of the objective reality.

Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya's life-long pursuit in acquiring knowledge of our rich cultural past was not motivated by a desire to acquire knowledge for its own sake but it was with a view to ultimately use this knowledge as a tool of transforming the present world. There are two implications of the above stated position. These are as follows:

(1) It is only the adoption of the dialectical materialist approach which can provide us with the knowledge of the past.

(2) The knowledge of the past can serve as a tool for transforming the present reality.

A corollary to the above position is the thesis that the idealists, in conformity with their metaphyscial approach, consider ideas in abstraction and thus only give a distorted and fantastic picture of both the thought-processes as well as the reality of the past. Thus, on the basis of their metaphysical methodology the idealists have been spreading the myth that the whole of Indian philosophy is spiritualistic and other worldly, having *moksha* as its sole objective.

The major contribution of Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya lies in exploding this myth. And this means re-evaluation of the whole of Indian philosophy and its was not an easy task. It required, on the part of Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, selecting and separating what is objective and meaninful from a whole host of magic rituals and mythology with which it is found to be intertwined.

To achieve this end, being equipped with Marxist methodology, Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya plodded his best not only through the obstruse philosophical texts but also other disciplines like anthropology, archaeology, the historiography of science and so on. Thus he drew his rich material from diverse disciplines of knowledge and knitted them into a comprehensive whole with the objective of showing the connection between the way people procured their means of livelihood and the thought-processes in ancient India.

◆

IN his first monumental work, *Lokayata*, Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya arrived at the most significant conclusion, namely, that the early Vedic people who, leading a tribal and communal life and procuring through rudimentary tools what is just sufficient for their survival, had no conception of the so-called higher spiritual ideals. They, due to their life-pattern, in his view, were instinctively materialists or proto-materialists having material prosperity and erotic life (*artha-kama-pradhana*) as the highest forms of human ideals. Thus, according to Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, the superimposition of spiritual principles on the circumscribed world outlook of the early Vedic people by the idealists, is illegitimate. Accepting the Marxist methodological premise that the idealist world outlook emerged on the philosophical scene only with the division of the society into classes—division into mental and manual labour—Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya held that idealism came on the philosophical scene in India much later than materialism.

These significant results of his research work gave a new perspective to the understanding of ancient Indian philosophy. To the traditional idealist philosophers these results were unacceptable. Thus, whereas, on the one hand, his works earned antagonism from the idealist philosophers, they, on the other hand, earned recognition from natural and social scientists for his seminal contribution towards the understanding of ancient Indian philosophical thought. This recognition is sufficiently evinced by the fact that in a recently published felicitation volume entitled *Philosophy, Science and Social Progress* (edited by the author) articles have been contributed by eminent natural and social scientists both from India and abroad, that is, Germany, the USA, the UK, China and Bulgaria.

Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya analysed the ancient Indian philosophical thought—including the nine traditional schools—with a view to separate what he called living components from the dead ones. By living he meant the rational and the material components of Indian thought that lead to social progress and by dead he meant the mystical and the spiritual components of Indian thought that hold back scientific progress.

In his analysis Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya brought out the fact that the materialist trend is invariably committed to secularism, rationalism and science-orientation and the obscurantist, the mystical, the irrational thought is reflected through the idealist trend.

Another important contribution of Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya lies in showing that the history of Indian philosophical activity, stretched over a period of about two thousand and five hundred years, is, like the histories of philosophies of all other ancient civilisations, a struggle between materialism and idealism. This struggle has been sometimes subdued, whereas at other times it has been very acute. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya's interpretation of ancient Indian thought in terms of the basic ideological struggle between materialism and idealism enables us to understand the reasons why even today, in a more acute form, the same ideological struggle is going on between the forces of reaction, represented by communalism, irrationalism, anti-humanism and obscurantism on the one hand, and the progressive forces, represented by secularism, rationalism, humanism and scientific temper on the other.

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IN his book, *Science and Society in Ancient India*—a book which is a continuation of his earlier work, *What is Living and What is Dead in Indian Philosophy*, Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya highlighted some of the important theoretcial achievements of the science of medicine in ancient times—that is, prior to Buddha. He also answered the question as to why, in spite of its early promise, it was not permitted to develop further. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya maintained here that out of all the sciences medicine contains the gretest science-potentials. We find that any discipline to be considered as science has to satisfy three basic requirements, that is, (i) acceptance of objective material reality which is governed by causal laws; (ii) complete knowability of the objective material reality through empirical observation and inference; (iii) Man, on the basis of his knowledge, can actively intervene in the material reality and bring about changes in it.

According to Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya inner demands of medical science oblige it to accept the above stated requirements of science. This is so because as the aim of medical science is to cure diseases by administering medicine, therefore the causes of the diseases as well as their cure must be in the material world. Furthermore, the medical man must believe in the interaction between man and nature for then only medicines prepared out of natural objects can cure the human body. Thus physicians, in ancient India, viewed both man and nature as made up of the same stuff, namely, matter which the pioneers of science understood as earth, water, air, fire and *akasa*.

A corollary to the acceptance of material reality is the discovery of the laws of this reality by man's own observation and rational inference, that is, to say that the nature of the diseases and the properties of the herbs can be discovered only by empirical methods.

Thus, in Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya's view, medical science is bound to have materialism and rationalism as its foundations. Hence medical science provides a world outlook. This world outlook is incompatible with the dominant norms and beliefs of the then existing hierarchical society. For example, a medical man cannot believe in the theory of *Karma* because *Karma*, if admitted at all, has got to be admitted as an omnipotent law, relentlessly determining whatever one enjoys or suffers in this life, inclusive, of course, of health and disease. Sickness as well as cure, if viewed as determined by the actions of the patient performed in the past life, it leaves the physician at best as a passive spectator of these, instead of one actively intervening in medical matters, removing morbid conditions with standardised techniques. Similarly, medical science denies both the existence of supersensible reality as well intuitive knowledge. As all the postulates of medical science ran counter to the vested interests of the dominant class-caste of the then existing hierarchical society, such as the belief in the other world, belief in the Law of *Karma* and the supremacy of the so-called intuitive knowledge, this class-caste ultimately succeeded in stifling the development of science. And this, according to Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, is the major external factor for the decline of scientific development in India.

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Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya brought out the materialistic and scientific components of ancient Indian philosophy not to glorify the past but to highlight the fact that the spiritual outlook is not an inherent characteristic of Indian philosophy. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya's works also dissipate the delusion that Eastern thought is other-worldly and thus non-scientific while Western thought is materialistic and thus scientific. He elucidated that knowledge is not the exclusive property of either East or West but is the common heritage of mankind.

Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya engaged himself in the philosophical activity not for acquiring knowledge for its own sake but with a view to ultimately use this knowledge as a tool which equips man to change the world. The past is to be studied, in his view, in order to discover the laws of social change and these laws can be the directing principles for guiding our activities.

Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya's total commitment to secularism, humanism and scientific temper prompted him to write not only books on philosophy, but to inculcate the scientific temper, he also wrote stories for children. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya authored and edited more than forty books in English and Bengali and many of these books have been translated into many Indian and foreign languages, that is, Chinese, Japanese, Russian and German. He also had to his credit a large number of articles published in various national and international journals. Some of his major works are *Lokayata; What is Living and What is Dead in Indian Philosophy; Indian Atheism; Science and Society in Ancient India;* and *History of Science and Technology in Ancient India.*

Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya's philosophical thought is directly relevant today when we are faced with the revivalist and obscurantist forces which are threatening the very fabric of our social and moral life. The best way to fight revivalist forces is to promote scientific knowledge. That would also be the best tribute to the abiding memory of Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya. ■

From Brooklyn to Vietnam

LEONARD A. GORDON

The author, a distinguished American academic and a member of the faculty of Columbia University, has specialised on contemporary Indian history. He is well known for his indepth research on Subhas Chandra Bose, Sarat Chandra Bose and the origins of Bengali nationalism. He joined the US-Indo-China Reconciliation Project when it sponsored its thirteenth group trip to Vietnam in January 1993. The project is the creation of John McAuliffe, grew out of the anti-war movement, and is an effort to bring more fruitful relations between the United States and post-war Vietnam. —Editor

I was a red diaper baby, that is, I grew up in a Left-leaning family in Brooklyn, New York, in which I heard of the evils of Western imperialism before I wore long pants. By the time I was in high school, I learned from my parents and the papers which they read that the French were fighting a dirty little war in Vietnam. And the French were assisted by their big brother, the Americans. But then in 1954 the first Vietnam war ended and the French lost. Shortly thereafter I entered Amherst College.

While I was at Amherst College, I had little contact with Asia. My work for the school newspaper enabled me to write about my concerns with McCarthyism, with social criticism, and with education, growing out of my background and the world around me at Amherst.

In the late 1950s at Amherst, we were offered an occasional lecture about what later came to be called the Third World, but except for a rarely offered course on Japan, there was little on the non-West. In retrospect, Amherst was like most other American colleges then in focusing almost exclusively on Western civilisation. Our teachers did press the extraordinary group of history honours students in my year to study the frontiers of the West as it connected to the non-West. At least this was a start.

I went off to Harvad to study the sociology I could not find at Amherst, but within a year switched back to history and particularly the study of imperialism. Even Harvard offered little about the course of Western imperialism, but I persevered and studied about imperialism in India and Africa. For my dissertation, I chose India, studied Bengali for a year at the University of Chicago, and made my way to Calcutta.

But that time, the Vietnam war was beginning to heat up a little during the administration of John Kennedy. I was classified 1-A, but was determined not to be sent as canon fodder to Vietnam if I could possibly help it. It seemed to me to be the continuation of the French colonial war against Vietnamese nationalists and I wanted no part of it. I was not a pacifist and would have fought against the Axis, but I was already against this war. With the help of various Senators and representatives from my home state insisting that I was learning skills vital to the national defence (Bengali was then a three-star language under the National Defence Education Act for there was a strong Communist Party in West Bengal which may have brought such a rating), I received a deferment because advanced education was an escape route from the draft. I went off to Calcutta to work on some aspects of British imperialism and Indian nationalism. When John Kennedy was killed I went to sign the condolence book at the US consulate, located on a street shortly after renamed Ho Chi Minh Street.

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WHEN I returned to the United States, I started to work in the anti-war movement. I was sent by the American Friends Service Committee in Chicago to explain to high school seniors in some schools why they should not be so happy to be drafted. The teachers and students were often quite hostile to me believing that critics of the war were anti-American. I thought, in contrast to this, that it was my patriotic duty to oppose the war. As they booed and hissed my talks about nationalism and Vietnamese history, I told them that they were going out to die in a conflict which they did not understand. Would they risk their lives unquestioningly?

From Chicago, I went to teach at Columbia Unversity and then Brooklyn College. At Columbia in the late 1960s and early 1970s, we founded a chapter of the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars and then an ad hoc group, Asian Scholars against the War, to oppose the Cambodian invasion. In 1968, the war was one issue among several when Columbia was closed down; in 1970, it was *the* issue. We organised both in New York and in Washington D.C. where a number of Senators and representatives joined scholars in concerted opposition to the war and the invasion of yet another country. I went on a local television news broadcast to present our views. For my effort I received a number of death threats in the mail.

By the time I switched to Brooklyn College in 1973, American troops were withdrawn and a peace treaty was signed. Vietnam quickly receded from American consciousness. But feeling that we had to learn from and remember the Vietnam experience, I began to teach about the Vietnam war as well as about nationalism and imperialism in India. I have made at least fifteen trips to India over the years and feel that Calcutta is one of my homes. But I always felt a little uneasy about Vietnam: I had never been there.

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AT the end of 1992, the opportunity came for me to go to Vietnam with the USIRP group. As a friend on the Vietnam trip said: "This is sensory overload." The impressions of a poor, but energetic and changing society rooted in a rich, diverse, and ancient civilisation were many. Since I find part of my vocation as an educator, let me say a few words about education in Vietnam. Our group visited the universities in Hanoi and Saigon, a famous secondary school in Hue, a school for street children in Saigon, and several research institutes. I was struck by the eagerness to learn and with the belief that changes in education are essential if they are going to shift from a command to a market economy. The universities taught Marxism in economics and philosophy, sent their best students to the USSR and the Eastern Bloc countries, and offered Russian to many secondary and university students. The collapse of the Soviet Union has them groping at their best institutions to reformulate their curriculum, indeed their whole view of the world.

At Hue on the Perfume River, we went to visit the Quoc Hoc High School, known throughout Vietnam for the fame and quality of its graduates including General Giap. After breaking through the formalities, we spread out into conversations with the teachers and students. I talked for some time with Truong Si San and Vinh Ba, two of the school's three English teachers. They were full of questions about Vietnam. They wanted to know about American interventionism and American isolationism. Were there patterns to be found? They wanted to know about religious fanaticism in India. Didn't India have other and more important problems to deal with?

Like other Vietnamese whom we met, I was struck by the warmth, the openness, and the lack of hostility to Americans. Perhaps there are powerful negative feelings hidden from such as us. We were just passing through, and a deeper knowing takes years of intimacy with another culture. Even then something remains unknown or unknowable to a foreigner. What they want is to go on, to go forward. The students are eager to learn English, to learn history, and at this particular school they are very proud of their accomplishments in maths, physics, and gymnastics. What is holding them back is the lack of resources. I gave them some dictionaries and English vocabularly books I had brought for this very purpose and promised them more books for their library. Months later I collected about 200 books and shipped them off hoping they would reach this school.

The Vietnamese we met did not seem to ruminate over the past. They defended their country against yet another foreign invader (as they see it). They won because the invader went home. But the last invader was not finished. "Why," asked the Vice-President of the Vietnamese Veterans Association in Hanoi, "are you punishing us?" I tried to answer, but could not defend an embargo policy I do not agree with. The leader of our group later said that it was a kind of rhetorical question. He did not really expect an answer. But I hope to make my own kind of response by continuing communications, by giving them whatever little help I can, and by lobbying in the United States for the lifting of the embargo. Vietnam is opening up more than before with the crashing of the USSR and the withdrawal from Cambodia. They are letting parties of American experts search for the remains of American MIAs. It is time for us to put out the hand of friendship to an independent Vietnam.

There were disturbing notes in the unwillingness to talk frankly about the failures of communism; about the continued presence of a police-state apparatus testified to by Vietnamese, but not visible to us; and regarding the abrupt removal of the safety net for the poorer sections of Vietnamese society as some of the leaders try to leap to capitalism. They have to transform their society. We can help them in a variety of ways; at least we should not hinder them. ■

Interview with a Russian poet

Yevtushenko on the Poetry and Prose of Life

Yevgeni Yevtushenko is one of the most famous names among the generation of Soviet Russian poets who came to the fore in the early sixties. An interview with him was published recently in the popular Russian weekly, Argumenty I Fakty *(Arguments and Facts). Interestingly, the poet was interviewed in New York by a correspondent of Radio Liberty.*

—Editor

Recently an event occurred in New York which attracted the attention of all cultured Americans. The New York Philharmonic Orchestra played the Thirteenth Symphony of Shostakovich. Poet Yevgeni Yevtushenko, who attended, read his poem *Babii Yar* and some other verses, including some in English. Below is an interview with the poet and also an English translation of his poem.

Question: You have come to New York from Oklahoma, where you live at present. What are you doing there? There are rumours that you have bought a ranch house in Oklahoma?

Answer: Well, I can answer only in Mark Twain's words: "The rumours about my death are somewhat exaggerated."

Q: Are things so bad with you?

A: On the contrary. I am trying to become the owner of a *dacha* in Peredelkino (a writer's colony near Moscow), 75 per cent of which I have built with my own money. I am not succeeding in this. I am not going to buy any house in Oklahoma, nor am I planning to live in America. I have only been invited to teach Russian poetry in this country. And a large anthology compiled by me is being published here in English. This will consist of 1000 pages of Russian poetry of the twentieth century. There will be 250 poets under a single cover. I must say with regret that I have not so far been able to find a publisher for this anthology in Russian—either in my own country or abroad.

Q: Yevgeni Alexandrovich, do you like the present—in Russia?

A: I think no normal person can like it. You know, I belong to the category of people who fought to free our country from the dictatorship of one party, from the monopoly of the state. We fought to free ourselves from censorship. I think that we have been able to win very great victories. And we defended these victories in August 1991.

But something then happened to our intelligentsia, myself included. As we didn't know, so to speak, what freedom is about in general, we idealised this freedom. For example, it then seemed to us that freedom of expression is the key to prosperity. But then it turned out that this was not quite so, because we can't eat freedom of speech, we can't clothe ourselves in it, nor can freedom of expression heat our homes in our cold winter. Besides, while idealising freedom, we thought that freedom has only a beautiful face.

Q: It was naive to expect.

A: Well, so we turned out to be naive...But I still think that what was done (I have in view the destruction of the one-party system and the end of censorship as a state institution) was all quite correct. And it was good that this happened. But then, we haven't yet learnt how to use this freedom.

Q: What was the main weakness of the generation of the sixties, both in and beyond politics?

A: We just had a great many natural political illusions. For example, Andrei Voznesensky wrote verses which the censor did not allow to be published for a long time: "I don't know what to do with this, but I request you, Comrade Central Committee, please remove Lenin from our coins and bank notes; his value is high." Today some people accuse Voznesensky of careeristic stunts, so to say. But at that time he thought just as many others did.

Q: Yevgeni Alexandrovich, and are there verses which you have written, which you now regret?

A: Of course, a large number. I have published about 120,000 lines of poetry. But you mustn't think that these poems were insincere. On the contrary, all this output was perfectly sincere. Of these 120,000 lines I wouldn't today print—well, about 70,000.

Q: Well, even such arithmetic goes in your favour, because you retain 50,000 lines all the same.

A: According to all the surveys that have been conducted in Russia, I am (excuse me for the term) the most saleable poet. Every man on the street knows my name, and knows, perhaps, some line or the other from a song or a poem of mine. My books are now nowhere to be had—they have all been sold out. But in spite of this, four of my books, compiled by myself, have been returned by different publishers. They explained this saying: "Paper is very expensive these days, prices are hitting the sky. So excuse us, Yevgeni Alexandrovich."

But this is what happened to me. I can manage to have other sources of earning. I can travel to America to speak, to lecture. But what are those poets to do who are not known at all? What are the young prose writers to do? They find themselves in an extremely difficult position.

Russia always differed from the West; nowhere except in Russia do you find professional poets. I had once written the lines: "Russia without Russian poetry would be like a vast Luxembourg."

Q: Valentin Rasputin says: "Well, if we live like they do in Western Europe, where will our spirituality be?" As if one can wish to live like in Western Europe, and one can do so...For this colossal, impossible work has to be done—to become a Luxembourg.

A: Now you have me pinned down on my back! You know, recently I visited the station called Zima in my country. A militiaman, whom I knew since my childhood, came to us. He is, in fact, a chauffeur, who once worked at my uncle's. And when he was taking me to my uncle's grave, he began to boast. (Well, we Siberians love boasting, but this is not the worst human failing.) He flung into the cabin several transparent bags with packets of money, so that I could see them. He has started an enterprise in a dashingly novel way; they make stained wood, basically larch wood. And he sells this stained wood in partnership with a German. He is a professional chauffeur—he loves cars. He has bought himself three cars—all of them new. And so he tells me: "Yevgeni Alexandrovich, I want to support local art here. Won't you advise me...?"

You understand, it is much better in the provinces than in Moscow, much better. It seems to be that people there are more active, they are somehow more enterprising, more resourceful. They no longer depend on the centre. And this is fine. And I therefore think that our country can grow into the future in the manner of little islands, different provinces, regions, and then they will join together. But some of them will push forward, into the future, and then pull others after themselves, to follow their example. This is how the transformation of our country will take place. And this will happen. It shall! ■

(Translated by Ravi M. Bakaya from *Argumenty I Fakty*, No. 6, February 1993)

Call to the Creative Community

They are out again with their arsenal
to gag, to maim, to kill.
They struck at Ayodhya
to unleash a communal carnage.
They threaten every sane voice today
to strike at our roots, our values and our freedom.

Will we keep silent
or shall we speak up?
Will each one of us stand alone
or shall we all come together?

Writers, artists and filmmakers
painters, sculptors and photographers
poets, dancers and musicians
women and men of the stage, screen and media
all together bound by our will
to defend and protect our freedom.

We call upon you to join us at a

Convention on Freedom of Expression

JULY 24, 1993
NEW DELHI

Mavlankar Auditorium, Rafi Marg, 10 AM. Contribution Rs 15 towards meeting expenses of the Convention. Followed by a *workshop* on July 25, at Deputy Chairman's Hall, Constitution Club, Vithalbhai Patel House, Rafi Marg, 10 AM. Please, confirm your participation by July 15, to the Organising Committee, Convention on Freedom of Expression, Rashtriya Ekta Abhiyan, 4 Purana Qila Road, New Delhi 110001. Tel: 3782340

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Pratap Samal, Suhas Borker
(Conveners)

Babii Yar

YEVGENI YEVTUSHENKO

Babii Yar is a ravine near Kiev, the capital of Ukraine. Many thousands of Jews were massacred here by the Nazis during the Second World War. This English translation was published in the December 1961 issue of ISCUS, the quarterly journal then published by the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society in Bombay and edited by the late Dr A.V. Baliga, President of the Society. The translation is by the late Archie Johnstone, a British journalist and writer who lived in Moscow. Born in 1932, Yevtushenko was then perhaps the most talked about and controversial of the younger generation of Soviet poets. —Editor

No sculptured headstones stand on Babii Yar—
the rough-hewn cleft is monolith enough—
and here, alive amid the countless dead,
I feel that I have lived not years but ages,
the ages of the ancient Jewish race.
Today I am a Jew, and here I walk
in Egypt's bondage, dragging leaden feet;
and here I, Dreyfus, face again my foes,
the howling mob that also is my judge.
My lot is to be hounded, spat upon,
reviled by silk- and satin-clad viragos
who jab their dainty sunshades in my face.
...I am a little boy in Belastok;
pogromists, breathing hate and vodka, storm
into our home; the floorboards soak up blood;
I plead that they should spare my mother's life;
a heavy boot kicks me aside. They chant:
"Beat up the Yids and keep our Russia safe."
Our Russia?...Oh, my Russian countrymen,
your love sweeps over frontiers, over creeds,
but often those whose hands were red with blood
invoked the sacred name of our dear land
and called themselves the Russian people's League
...And, standing here, I know myself to be
Anne Frank, as tender as a bud in spring,
and as defenceless. Love has come to me,
a love that needs no poet's shining words,
for shining eyes say all that need be said.
How little does life hold for us, my love—
how little and how much! We may not see
from here the blue of sky, the green of leaf,
but in this darkened room our lips may meet..
They're coming?—No, the footsteps that you hear
are but the blessed steps of coming spring.
Knocks at the door?—Be not afraid, my love:
the river breaks its bonds; our winter ends.

The grasses whisper over Babii Yar,
each tree a solemn judge; a deathly silence
clamours in my ears. I bare my head;
it seems my hair is slowly turning grey and I am but an endless, soundless moan
Mourning the nameless dead of Babii Yar.
Greybeards, husbands, wives and slaughtered babes
each one of them am I; and while I live
my blood, my flesh, my bones will not forget.
When earth's last anti-Semite is interred
the *International* will thunder here.
Although I have no Jewish blood in me,
well may they hate me as they hate a Jew
for I have hated them through all my life—
And thus a true son of Russia I am.

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Jawaharlal Nehru

(October 4, 1940)

Sah Brothers

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Nurul Hasan • Uruguay Round • Mandela Turns 75

Mainstream

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EDITORIAL

Moment of Truth

As the date of resumption of Parliament for its monsoon session—July 26—draws near it is becoming increasingly transparent that the Opposition parties, regardless of their phenomenal political and ideological differences, would be making common cause to ensure the defeat of the ruling Congress on the floor of the Lok Sabha while tabling the no-trust motion against the Narasimha Rao Ministry. This being the ground reality at this point of time it is difficult to visualise the Union Government's survival on the motion unless, of course, if the Prime Minister himself voluntarily steps down in the interest of probity in public life following the grave allegation of Rs 1 crore pay-off levelled by Harshad Mehta of the multi-crore securities scam fame. In this setting the Congress spokesman's bravado that the Prime Minister was capable of weathering any storm appears to be more to reassure the ruling party members that the end was not in sight than a reflection of confidence. For who can overlook the intense panic and nervousness that have gripped the Congress MPs less than a fortnight before the reopening of Parliament?

All this is not to deny, however, that the Congress has given up all hopes of success in creating fissures within the Opposition camp. Members of the crisis management team of the ruling party have become overactive of late. Apart from the usual plea to leaders of the Left parties not join hands with the communal BJP on any issue inside Parliament, they are seeking to enlist support of some of the dubious personalities in the Opposition to steps based on palpably specious pretexts that would eventually help the Congress to overcome its current crisis. Nevertheless, if the latest developments are any indication of the shape of things to come, such elements in the Opposition have been effectively cornered by the upright stand of several noted Opposition stalwarts for whom probity as a moral issue ranks above all other considerations. Even if such persons are rare in today's world of murky politics where honesty is in short supply, we can still count on some of them like Rabi Ray, Benoy Chowdhury, Chitta Basu, Tridib Chaudhuri and Indrajit Gupta in the Opposition as also oldguards like Ram Niwas Mirdha and B.N. Pandey in the Congress. Even today their voices command respect and attention.

No doubt Narasimha Rao's responses to the pay-off charge has grievously hurt the Congress and none expects the ruling party under the present Prime Minister's leadership to fare well at the hustings if a snap poll is thrust on the country in the coming days. Nonetheless, if he heeds to public sentiments even at this late stage and orders an impartial inquiry into the allegation levelled by Harshad Mehta and vacates the post of the Prime Minister till the completion of the investigation, he would be setting a unique and healthy precedent that could go a long way in restoring public faith in our system of governance.

The moment of truth is fast approaching for Narasimha Rao. For all his indecisiveness he can barely escape deferring the crucial decision on which depends not just his political future but the very vitality of our parliamentary democracy.

July 14 *S.C.*

Uphold JPC's Credibility

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

The Joint Parliamentary Committee probing into the securities scam has inevitably to extend its protracted labours. The star character in the securities scandal, Harshad Mehta, having gone back on his previous position and publicly levelled serious allegation of having paid the Prime Minister Rs 1 crore and have secured benefits in consequence, there was no escape for the JPC from brushing aside this latest development.

What has been entrusted to the JPC by Parliament is an assignment without precedence. No parliamentary committee since independence has been entrusted with such an awesome responsibility. The biggest scandal in the stock exchange has shaken the confidence of the country because through speculation and official connivance, reckless speculators have swindled thousands of innocent people apart from the government having to incur a heavy loss, which is estimated at Rs 5000 crores by cautious calculations. It was, therefore, urgently necessary that this shocking scam should be thoroughly probed so that the confidence in the country's banking and financial system is restored both at home and abroad.

There was thus no question of the sordid case being probed in haste or in a cavalier fashion. That is precisely what the JPC has taken care not to do so far. Judging by the draft report prepared by a sub-committee of the JPC in which different political parties have een adequately represented, one may venture to say that the JPC has tried to place before the country not only the magnitude of the scandal but has sought to identify the weaknesses of the system as also the subjective responsibility of individuals holding high offices in the system. It is in this context that the Finance Minister's responsibility in underplaying the scandal at the beginning has become the subject of exciting debate in the public. The provocation for such a controversy has been provided by the Finance Minister himself who has in an extraordinary public statement tried to pre-empt the findings of the Parliamentary Committee and attempted to pass the buck, seeking to find alibis for his dereliction of duty on this score.

It needs to be noted here that the Finance Ministry has from the very beginning done its best to undermine the standing of the JPC, as when it was found to have sought to brief its members selectively, providing answers and excuses for the likely questions to be raised in connection with the scam. When this was detected, the Finance Ministry including Dr Manmohan Singh himself tried to beat a hasty retreat. Later on, when he was confronted with his own remarks pooh-poohing the gravity of the scam when the stock exchange had already been overheated, he made heroic efforts to show that as far he personally was concerned, he had been all the time issuing orders to different officials to be vigilant, thereby shirking his substantive responsibility as the Finance Minister entrusted with the custody of the nation's finance. Any honest person holding such an important assignment would have himself come forward owning up his responsibility for the mismanagement so blatantly shown up on the part of his Ministry. One expects such trotting of lame excuses from third-class politicians and not from a senior Cabinet Minister of a great republic such as ours.

◆

WORSE still has been the latest disclosure by a senior officer of the Central Bureau of Direct Taxes that the Finance Ministry bigwigs including the Minister himself displayed reluctance, if not displeasure, at any move for a thorough search of Harshad Mehta's premises. Side by side there has so far been very little investigation by the CBI into the affairs of other characters in the scandal. In fact, the manner in which CBI Deputy Directr Madhavan was dissuaded from following up the track of Harshad Mehta's foreign accounts which might have led to conclusive evidence of his close nexus with corrupt politicians in high places betrays the magnitude of difficulties that the JPC has to encounter.

(Continued on page 32)

Seventytwo year old Professor Saiyid Nurul Hasan, who passed away in Calcutta on July 12, was an outstanding scholar, an eminent historian and a distinguished educationist. Born on December 26, 1921, he completed his master's degree from Lucknow University and his D.Phil. from Oxford University in 1942. He taught History at Lucknow, Aligarh and Delhi Universities, as also the School of Oriental and African Studies, London; was President of the Indian History Congress thrice and associated himself with the UNESCO's prestigious project "History of Mankind". Later as the Union Education Minister he was instrumental in setting up the Indian Council for Historical Research. A Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, Prof Hasan was also a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, London as well as of the Royal Asiatic Society, London. In his academic pursuits he made a seminal contribution to the comprehension of the conditions prevailing in the Mughal period.

A brilliant student, he was associated with the launching of the All-India Students' Federation at Lucknow in 1936. A member of the Rajya Sabha from 1969 to 1978, he came close to Indira Gandhi and served her government as the Union Minister for Education, Social Welfare and Culture from 1972 to 1977 when he introduced the innovative 10+2+3 educational system overriding opposition from several States. As the Indian Ambassador to the former USSR (1983-86) Prof Nurul Hasan played a vital role in cementing the bonds of friendship between the peoples of the two countries and established close rapport with the intelligentsia and scholars of Russia as well as Central Asia. He was also a Visiting Fellow of the USSR Academy of Sciences.

He served West Bengal as its Governor in two spells having been appointed in 1986 and 1990, and died in harness as the State Governor. He set an exemplary record as the Governor of one of the most volatile States of India run by a non-Congress Government by refusing to be drawn into party politics, thus earning profound respect of the ruling Left Front—a rare feat indeed.

A towering figure in the academic field, Prof Nurul Hasan was, above all, a warmhearted personality who could attract people by dint of his intellectual calibre and a remarkably open mind. As the prominent Marxist historian, Prof Irfan Habib, himself a student of Prof Hasan, has observed, he sympathised with Marxists but protested against any mechanical application of the materialist interpretation of history. Towards the end of his life he passionately fought the rising trend of religious revivalism and obscurantism bringing into focus the concept of tolerance and the composite culture of our nationhood. While offering homage to his memory we carry here an intimate personal tribute written for Mainstream *by his close friend, the noted historian and biographer of Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr Sarvepalli Gopal.*

—Editor

My Friend Nurul

SARVEPALLI GOPAL

To write about someone who has been a close friend for nearly fifty years and has now suddenly gone is not easy. Nurul Hasan and I were at Oxford together in the years immediately after the War. He had a first-rate mind which he nourished with wide reading. His thesis on Moinuddin Chisti, with its emphasis on the social and economic contexts, was generally assessed as of first-rate quality; but Nurul was a perfectionist and could not be persuaded to publish it till it came up to his own high standards.On his return to India he was asked by Nehru, at a time when the Indian foreign service was being set up, if he would like to be considered for it; but Nurul preferred to stick to the academic life. He and his wife, Dawn, made a finely integrated couple, and their home at Aligarh was a centre of intellectual fraternising.

Dawn's sudden death in 1967 was a big blow to Nurul. His loneliness was clear when soon after he came to Oxford for a year as a Visiting Fellow of All Souls. I also happened to be in Oxford at that time, and we used to meet at least once a week, to eat crumpets toasted over a gas fire and garnished with mango pickle, while talking of all matters.

It was this loneliness which, I think, was a primary factor in Nurul allowing himself, on his return to India, to be sucked into public life. The loss was to scholarship and he was unable to fulfil the promise, which he had revealed in his few articles and talks, and produce the authoritative works of historical analyses that he was capable of. He gave, in the late sixties, six lectures on Akbar at the Institute of Advanced Studies at Shimla; but these also he would not publish hoping to develop them into a full-scale work; and this too was not to be.

At this moment, however, I lament not these unfinished writings but the loss of a firm friend. The warmth and depth of his friendship no differences on public issues could shake. And this is a feeling which, I know, I share with very many others. ■

Harshad's Charge/PM's Defence

Dissecting the Official Version

ANITA PRATAP

The official refutation of Harshad Mehta's serious allegation of having paid Rs 1 crore to P.V. Narasimha Rao at the Prime Minister's residence on November 4, 1991 depends so far largely on the visitors' log book at the Prime Minister's Office in South Block as also the police wireless log and diary. By exposing the gaping holes in the official version relying on the internal evidence furnished by those logs, Anita Pratap has been able to rebut the denial in a highly professional manner. Her following three-part article is based on close examination of the internal evidence and is a remarkable exercise in investigative journalism. She won her spurs in the profession by her perceptive reportage in The Telegraph *in the early stages of the Sri Lankan crisis. Presently the Delhi-based correspondent of the well-known American journal,* Time, *she has published this incisive analysis in* The Statesman *(July 11-13, 1993) from where it is being reproduced with due acknowledgement.* —Editor

On June 16, the day Harshad Mehta made public his allegation that he had given the Prime Minister Rs 1 crore, P.V. Narasimha Rao issued a denial which categorically refuted having taken the money, but which omitted to mention whether he had met the controversial stockbroker. This became the crucial issue, till three days later, the government spokesman denied categorically that the PM met Mehta. He said the PM was in his South Block Office all through from 10.00 AM to 1.15 PM.

But it was only on June 28, that is, almost two weeks after Mehta first made his allegations, that the spokesman finally released proof, which were a sheaf of photostated documents. According to him, the documents "established conclusively, the unvarnished truth that the PM was in his office and not home during this time".

The documents do no such thing. One document is suspicious and the other three are worthless. They do not prove anything and in fact raise and not quell suspicions. The documents leave a crucial gap of at least 30 minutes unexplained, intriguingly enough, from 10.45 to 11.00 AM, exactly when the pay-off was allegedly made.

On June 29 and 30, that is, immediately after the spokesman released the documents, *The Statesman* frontpaged stories pointing out serious discrepancies and inadequacies in the government documents. That provoked me to scrutinise these documents in detail. It was like opening a can of worms. There were so many more damaging flaws. I drew a list of discrepancies and flaws, which I confronted the spokesman with. I was in a very advantageous position because I have always had very good access to him. Thus, I was able to get his explanations for the discrepancies, which as I will proceed to list out, simply do not measure up. These documents are in fact a calculated attempt to confuse and mislead the press.

I spent two sessions with the government spokesman. In fairness, I must say the spokesman was patient and gave me a lot of his time. But he was stumped repeatedly and eventually gave up. He finally took the stand that the government will not be tried by the press.

There are four documents. One is the visitors' log book in the Prime Minister's Reception Office, the second is the Signal Officer's Diary, the third is the Police wireless log and the fourth is the the minute-to-minute movement of the PM based on 15 wireless nets operating in the city.

◆

LET'S take the PMO visitors' log book first. This is the document that seeks to prove that the PM was in his Office meeting the Pakistani dlegation at 10.45 AM on November 4. This document records *chronologically* the entry of visitors to his Office. The crucial section is from page 38 onwards. (See chart) This section records entry of visitors from 8.25 AM onwards. Visitors are logged in sequentially till 10.45 AM when the head of the 16-member Pakistani delegation, Agha Shahi, Pakistan's former Foreign Secretary, is logged in at 10.45. He is serial number 18. The first discrepancy, which a section of the press has already pointed out, is that the first 11 members of the Pakistani delegation are logged in at 10.45. But the last five, from serial 29 to 33 are logged in at 10.30! As the serial numbers show they come after, the time logged in should be the same, if not later.

The serial numbers of all 16 members of the Pakistani delegation run one after the other. Still, the spokesman's explanation is that the delegation came in two groups. He claims, the first log, headed by Agha Shahi, actually came in a little earlier than 10.30. But an official from the Ministry of External Affairs had prepared an advance pass for them. That is customary for dignitaries. According to the spokesman, the time logged in the visitor's book for the first lot was actually the time of appointment with the PM and not their time of arrival.

He further adds that the MFA official went in along with the first lot. The second lot arrived at 10.30 and as no advance pass had been made for them, their actual time of arrival was noted down in the reception register. They had to go through the normal routine. A minor question is: why wasn't the VIP treatment given to the second group, who were also part of this important delegation? After all, the MEA is not short of officials to recieve dignitaries. The spokesman had no answer, but we shall let that pass. There are far more serious questions to raise.

So the government's contention is that the first group had actually arrived a little before 10.30. I will proceed to demolish this crucial contention.

Serial number 17, Sumit Nag, a photographer from Springdales School, just precedes Agha Shahi who tops the Pakistani delegation. Nag is logged in at 10.45. He is an ordinary visitor, who must go through the normal routine. He has no advance pass made for him, so his is the time of arrival. So there is no way the first lot of Pakistanis could have come in before 10.45.

When this was pointed out, the spokesman said, it is not very clear whether the preceding persons were logged in 10.15 or 10.45. When many people arrive together, the clerk puts ditto marks in the column for time. There is an overwriting, whereby it is not clear whether serial Number 14, one Mrs Ramachandran, arrived at 10.15 or 10.45. The hour, that is "10" is very clear, but due to the overwriting, one cannot say whether the minute logged in is 15 or 45.

But there is a crucial page turn here and the clerk has logged in the time for the next person, instead of putting ditto marks. Ms Shivali Kochar, serial no 15, who is the first person who is recorded on page 39, the same page where the first few members of the Pakistani delegation begin to get listed. In Kochar's case, the hour is not clear. But the minute, that is, 45, is very

As a ready reckoner for the readers, here is a chart showing the entries of visitors in the log book of the reception in the Prime Minister's Office.

Page 38

Sl. No.	Name	Address	Time	Pass No.
13.	Lalu Kumar Tiwari	M.E.A.	10.00	5953
14.	Mrs Ramachandran		10.15/45	5954
Page 39				
15.	Ms Shivali Kocher	Springdales	7.45	5956
16.	Navneet Batra	"	"	5957
17.	Sumit Nag	"	"	5959
Change in handwriting begins				
18.	Agha Shahi	Former Foreign Minister	"	5960
19-28	List of names of the Pak delegation	Details each one's designation	"	5961 to 5970
Page 40				
29-33	Begins with Afridi ends with Peer Khalid	"	10.30	5971 to 5975
Handwriting reverts and chronology resumes and is maintained				
34.	Vidhur Ratna	Springdales	10.45	5976
35.	Ashok Kumar	Parliament	10.45	5977
36.	Vijay	NIC	10.45	5979
37.	Ashok Jain	TDA	10.57	5981

And the list entered in this particular log book goes on till serial number 78 who is clocked in at 7.25 PM. There is flawless chronology of time maintained. No backwards and forwards in the time logged in after serial number 34, when the last member of the Springdales team is clocked in.

clear. So if we doubted whether Mrs Ramachandran had come in at 10.15 or 10.45, the next entry makes it clear the last person before the Pakistani delegation clocked in at 10.45. When I pointed this out, *the spokesman could not come up with an explanation.*

Thus if the first lot of Pakstanis had arrived at 10.45, how could the second lot arrive at 10.30? Therefore, the most suspicious section of the Reception book is from serial 29 to 33. Going by the government's contention, the second lot begins with Rahmad Afridi, who is serial number 29. We have established that even the first of the delegation could not have clocked in before 10.45, then how is it that the second lot of Pakistanis are clocked in at 10.30?

It is of crucial importance that there is a page turn here. Afridi is the first person listed on page 40. As it's a page turn, the first entry shows the time logged in. This is given as 10.30. What makes this section of the document highly suspicious is that the time could have been inserted at any time later. Subsequent inertions cannot be made out from photostat copies. *But, if you scrutinise the time logged in for afridi's entry, you can see a faint ditto mark* (to be precise on the zero of 10). The ditto (which appears almost erased) could make perfect sense— it could have been for 10.45, the time logged in for Agha Shahi, the head of the delegation! A forensic examination, including photography under ultra violet light and infra red rays, must be conducted to check whether there has been overwriting and chemical or physical erasure in this section of the original document.

II

THE government's contention that the Pakistani delegation came in two groups falls flat for two reasons. Firstly, due to the handwriting. I am absolutely sure it is true that an MEA official usually waits at the Reception office to receive such important delegations. I feel it is this MEA official who has entered the names of the visitors in the log book and not the clerk who sits with the book. The reason is that *there is a change in handwriting for the entries for all 16 members of the Pakistani delegation.* It is clear that one person entered all 16 of them and from the change in handwriting, it is clear that it is not the reception clerk. After the names of all the Pakistanis have been entered, the handwriting reverts to the same as before the delegation. Thus till serial number 17, *the handwriting for the entire Pakistani delegation is the same. This would not have been possible if they had come in two stages.* Remember, we are told the MEA official had gone in with the first lot. Yet the handwriting is the same! Besides, it is improbable that the Pakistani delegation would be so cavalier as to come in two groups. A meeting with the Prime Minister is the high point of their visit and they are all likely to have been together, not just dribble in.

But there is yet another reason, why I am convinced the Pakistani delegation came in one group. If one were to go by the log book, one can recreate the scenario as follows. *A delegation from Springdales School was being lodgged in at 10.45 when the Pakistanis arrived. As the Pakistanis are VIPs, they cannot be made to wait. The Springdales team is interrupted to enter the names of the Pakistanis.* I say this because serial numbers 15 to 17, the ones just preceding Agha Shahi are from the Springdales School. The one just after the Pakistani delegation, serial number 34, is also from Springdales. Thus, *the Springdales delegation precedes, and follows the Pakistani delegation.* And what time is serial number 34, the last member of the Springdales team, clocked in? Believe it or not, the time given is 10.45. So clearly, the Springdales team and the Pakistanis had arrived at the same time, which was at 10.45.

Even the serial numbers of the individual entry passes issued to the visitors prove this. The pass numbers for the first group of the Springdales team is 5956, 5957, 5959. The pass number for Agha Shahi, who is the first of the Pakistani delegation, is 5960. If an advance pass had been made for the first group of Pakistanis, their entry passes would have serial numbers that precede the Springdales team. The pass numbers for the rest of the Pakistani delegation continue sequentially. Thus the last of the Pakistani member's pass number is 5975. The next one, the Springdales member, is given pass number 5976. *Thus it is absolutely clear that the Pakistanis arrived in one lot at 10.45.* After serial number 34, the chronology of visitors to South Block in this particular book is again maintained without any discrepancies.

◆

WHILE I have interviewed Prime Minister Narasimha Rao in his house, I have personally gone through the security check procedures in

(Continued on page 33)

Anatomy of Communalism

A.K. BISWAS

"Many Hindus hold it," says K.R. Malkani in an article recently, "against the Muslims that they sided with the British and forced the partition of India. They are right—but not wholly right. From 1757 to 1905, Muslims opposed British rule more vigorously than the Hindus. They took very active part in 1857—and again in 1921. After that, thanks to the intrigues of the British and their agents, Muslim masses were misled into favouring partition." He goes further to add:

> Partition was a folly and a crime. It has hurt Muslims as much as the Hindus. The real villian here was the Briton—perfidious Albion—and not the Momim.[1]

He is, in fact, not alone. A great majority of Indians, particularly Hindus, hold such views. There are a host of historians and intellectuals who too sail in the boat of Malkani. They cannot be blamed. History had been written by persons who were themselves suffering from prejudice and myopia.

◆

JUDICIAL pronouncements all over the world are considered as one of the vital sources of historical and sociological information. The same should be true in this country as well. Let us examine one specific prounouncement in a case that had raw communal overtones with great potential for embittering the intercommunity relations in Barisal (erstwhile Backerganj, now in Bangladesh).

In 1927 a Criminal Revision Petition came up before the High Court, Calcutta. This arose from the order of the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Barisal binding down one Satindra Nath Sengupta of the district under Section 107 Criminal Procedure Code with direction to "execute bond of Rs 5000 with two sureties of Rs 2500 each to keep peace for one year". When appealed to a Sessions Judge, Barisal, "the order requiring the security was upheld but the amount of bond was reduced to Rs 500, together with two sureties of Rs 250 each".[2] Why was Sengupta required to execute bond for keeping peace for a year? Their Lordships, Justice Chotzner and Justice Gregory, of the Calcutta High Court noted the findings of the Sessions Judge, Barisal, verbatim as hereunder:[3]

The author is the Commissioner, Tirhut and Saran Divisions, Muzaffarpur, Bihar.

> Put in a nutshell, the case for the Crown is that Satindra Nath Sen had during a period of extremely strained feeling between the two communities on religious matters enunciated the principle that it was the Hindus' inherent right to pass with music before all mosques, at all times of the day and night. In pursuance of this principle, he had collected men and money and had organised a movement commonly known as the Satyagraha movement. His followers were numerous and loyal to him. He had been responsibe for processions at Meghia and Barisal which had flouted orders lawfully promulgated and he had asserted that he would resort to violence if necessary. During the *Doljatra* festival in spite of orders under Section 144 Cr. P.C., he told the District Magistrate that if he organised a procession it would be on the lines of the others for which he had been responsible. Further *he was prepared to organise these processions before any mosque in the district where Mahomedans opposed it.* The prosecution has succeeded in proving these facts and alleges that Satindra Nath Sen is in a position to carry out his threats. In the present condition of the district, action as described above is likely to lead to clashes between the two communities and disturbances of the public tranquility are probable.[4] (Italics mine—A.K.B.)

The moral and ethical content of the *satyagraha* enunciated by Gandhiji is noble. What the leader of Barisal was indulging in was but perversion and travesty of the philosophy of the Mahatma. But then Satindra Nath Sengupta was a political leader of the district of some consequence. In the name of *satyagraha*, he was indulging in rabid communalsm in Barisal where, according to the Census of 1911, out of every 10,000 population, 6974 were Muslims and 2962 Hindus.[5] The Calcuttans have perpetuated the memory of this communalist leader from Barisal by naming a locality as *Satin Sen Palli* near Kankurgachi rail bridge.

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THE high-born Hindu attitude to the education of the Muslims of Bengal is best exemplified by their attitude towards the establishment of the Dacca University in the teeth of fierce opposition from the former. The debates in the Bengal Legislative Council bear testimony. Opposing the proposal to cut the funds of the Dacca University, a representative from Dacca, Khwaja Mohammad

Azam, said:

> Eastern Bengal supplies the bulk of Bengal income and we do not grudge that the bulk of its expenditure is swallowed by West Bengal, and I cannot understand why West Bengal people should grudge us a pittance which has been long overdue and should have been given to us years back. I cannot understand the jealousy of Calcutta University men for Dacca.[6]

On the same subject, A.K. Fazlul Hauqe who later rose to be the Premier of Bengal prior to partition in 1947, issued a stern warning:

> My own feeling has been that ever since Lord Hardinge announced that there should be this university in Dacca city—this long-promised, long-deferred, long-wished-for university—Dacca—has been a sort of eyesore to the intellectual savants who control the destinies of the Calcutta University. I do not wish to go into this matter, but I wish to give this warning to my friends of West Bengal, who rise up on every occasion, when funds are provided for Dacca, to try and take away from this provision—"Hands off," I say. If you raise this question in Council, you will cause a cleavage between the two sections of the province, which will be disastrous to the work of administration. It is not merely on behalf of the Muhammadans of East Bengal but on behalf of the people of East Bengal in general, that I appeal to my friends to drop all opposition to this grant which the Minister wants for Dacca University.[7]

Establishment of the Dacca University would bring higher education nearer home of the numerically predominent Muslim community and the low castes for whom high-born Hindus of Bengal had nothing but limitless hatred and contempt. Education in these elements was to throw the children of the higher classes in competition for jobs which hitherto was a complete monopoly. This potential threat of competition was perceived as an unwelcome feature inherent in the establishment of the proposed unviersity which ultimately came into being in 1921 at Dacca.

To appreciate the position we refer to the Census of Bengal in 1901. E.A. Gait, ICS, Census Superintendent, says:

> The most noticeable feature of this return is the very small share of high appointments which falls to the Muhammadans and the practical monopoly of all such appointments held by Hindus by the members of the Brahman, Baidya and Kayasth castes. The Hindus are less than twice as numerous as the followers of the Prophet, but they hold nearly nine times the number of high appointments, viz., 1235 compared with only 141. Again, of the total Hindu population, less than 1 in every 11 is a Brahman, Baidya or Kayasth, but these three castes between them hold 1104 of the 1235 appointments filled by Hindus. Their advantage is still more marked, if we consider only the highest appointments. The three High Court judgeships and 22 posts in the Covenanted and Statutory Civil Service, whcih are held by Hindus, are all filled by members of these three castes. As regards their relative success amongst themselves, it will be noticed that the Baidyas have by far the largest share of these appointments and the Brahmans the smallest. The Baidyas are outnumbered by the Brahmans and Kayasths in the ratio of 34 to 1 and 18 to 1, respectively; yet they can boast of 7 Convenanted and Statutory Civilians compared with only two who are Brahmans and 13 who are Kayasths. Of the Deputy and Sub-Deputy Magistrates, 70 are Baidyas, 128 Brahmans, and 144 Kayasths. The proportion of Baidyas is not so high amongst the Sub-Judges and Munsifs, but even here, with 40 appointments, compared with 136 filled by Brahmans and 160 by Kayasths, they have far more than their fair numerical share. On the other hand, the Rajput and Khatris, though they number nearly a million and a half, hold only 5 high appointments, and the Babhans [Bhumihar] with over a million hold none. The Goalas with nearly 4 millions claim but 1 appointment—a subordinate post in the Medical Department. Numerous castes are entirely unrepresented in the higher grades of the Civil Service of the State, and amongst whom it will suffice to mention the Rajbansis and namasudras with an aggregate strength of nearly 4 millions, and the Kurmis and the Bagdis, each numbering over a million.[8]

The fact remains that the high-caste Hindus, according to the Census of 1931, "formed 6.1 per cent of the population of Bengal".[9]

This position did not obtain in Bengal overnight. Bengal then comprised of the present West Bengal and Bangladesh, Bihar and Orissa. In total exclusion of others, the three castes had grabbed the higher appointments. The position in respect to the junior appointment was no better. While deposing before the Public Service Commission on February 25, 1887, Abdul Jubbar, a Member of the Bengal Legislative Council and Deputy Magistrate, 24-Parganas (a surprising combination?), on the system of appointment to the Statutory service, observed:

> A system of limited competition: that is, Government should nominate, say, four candidates for each appointments, and there should be a competition between the nominees; those appointments allotted to Natives being apportioned between Hindus and Muslims according to population. The appointments allotted to the Mahomedans would be competed for by the Mahomedans only, and those allotted to Hindus by Hindus only.[10]

The MLC-cum-Deputy Magistrate, a native of Burdwan district, futher went on record to state:

> I propose these limitations on political, and not on religious or race grounds. The inhabitants of India are divided into two great religious sects. It is not just that one of them should preponderate in the public service.[11]

Did he not utter some home truth pregnant with the sincere concern for the well-being of the nation? Well, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the Father of Pakistan, was only 11 years old when Maulvi Abdul Jubbar was deposing before the Commission. (Jinnah was born on December 25, 1876.)

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IT is not the end, rather the tip of the iceberg of the invisible hatred of the Bengal Hindus towards the Muslims of Eastern Bengal. Fortunately, some of the Bengali Civilians have started speaking up their minds after the inevitable has already taken its heavy toll. More renowned for his literary works, Annada Sankar Ray, ICS, while recounting his memoirs, informs thus:

> A week before partition I was leaving Mymensingh for Howrah on transfer. As the train steamed into the station there were loud bomb blasts on the platform. I gather that those were the gun salutes in honour of the first ever Muslim station master of Mymensingh. All his predecessors were Barendra Brahmins in fulfilment of a contract with the then Maharaja of Mymensingh in the nineteenth century.[12]

There are countless Hindus to discover the dirty British *divide and rule* tactics responsible for the partition of India!

H. Beverlay, who superintended the first ever systematic census in Bengal, says that "throughout the central and eastern districts (with the exception of the 24-Parganahs) the Muhammadans constitute at least one-half of the population. Within these districts is a central tract running from Rungpore and Mymensingh on the north to the Bay of Bengal, in every part of which the Muhammadans are in a decided majority."[13] To appreciate the exact relative strength as between the followers of these two great faiths suffice it to mention that in Mymensingh, according the Census of 1872, the total population was 2,349,917. Of them 817,963 were Hindus and 1,519,635 Muslims. In other words, the Muslims were almost double in numerical strength than thhe Hindus.[14] The Brahmans were only 33,414 souls then in the district.[15] In terms of percentage, they were an insignificant 1.42 per cent of the total population of the district. The audacious and impudent Maharaja of Mymensingh showed utter contempt for the entire population of the district except the handful of Brahmans. Who then sowed the seeds of separatism and disintegration?

Ray further discloses that

> *There was another Maharaja, the Maharaja of Susang, whose terms included the obligations that the Munsif of Durgapur must be a Brahmin.*[16]

The readers need not be unnecessarily perturbed over the question of judicial impartiality of the Munsif if one of the accused belonged to the caste of the Zamindar. For a Hindu, said Dr B.R. Ambedkar once very succinctly, "between country and caste, caste comes first". It matters little, if they break up even a country in the process of promoting one's own caste fanatically.

We further have it on the authority of the same Bengali Civilian that Muslim students were denied the benefit of admission in the Vidyasagar College, Calcutta. When the teachers of this college opened a branch in Siuri, Birbhum there too Muslims were anathema.[17] Ray bemoans Hindu opposition as largely responsible for educational backwardness among the Bengal Muslims. Had they progressed educationally at par with the Hindus, albeit high-born, the former would not perhaps demand special privileges and a separate homeland.[18] They were steeped deeply in their self-service and totally bereft of sympathy for others in the same society.

On the other end, we find shining examples of the groundswell of Brotherhood and sympathy of the low and despised people towards the neighbouring Muslims in Eastern Bengal. The Census Report of 1911 makes a startling disclosure that "a Namasudra in Dinajpur (in Bangladesh) who gave evidence for Massalman against another Namasudra was outcasted for *twenty years*".[19]

The outcasting was a severe social punishment as in that the person and/or his family stood boycotted and ostracised by the entire community of Namasudras. The Caste Panchayat had declared the Namasudra outcast. Nobody would venture to face a situation of this nature that too to help a Muslim. We often come across scores of cases in which considerable influence is exercised at different levels to safeguard the caste interest in a clanish manner. Even at this age of socio-cultural development, there are people to succumb to pressure of caste guild. But the Namasudra, though low and despised by the high castes and eduationally destitute at that point of time, did not deter from his path and gave evidence in the case for a Muslim against his own casteman and suffered for twenty long years social ostracisation. Who taught him secular values? Did not many a venerable social reformer and educationist thus raise roadblocks towards building an integrated and harmonious society by acknowledging the basic human dignity and need for educational and cultural development for all?

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A reputed demographer and prolific writer, Asok Mitra, ICS, has thrown some insight into the Hindu attitude towards the Muslims in social intercourse in an article published recently. "In 1950 I came to Calcutta," says Mitra, "to set up the State's (West Bengal) census organisation. A large number of displaced Hindus with whom I worked in East Pakistan applied for jobs. Among them was a respected former assitant headmaster of a celebrated school of Vikrampur (Dacca). He was a Brahmin which may have added to his professional reputation. I asked him his reason for leaving East Pakistan. He said he had never felt threatened up to the last. On the contrary, everybody, including his village and school, had begged him to stay on. But then he made the decision on a particular morning, when some of the Muslim neighbours, almost his peers in their own community, visited him and quite naturally and unselfconsciously took their seats on the bench of his raised verandah. This, he said, was soemthing they had never done before, content in the past to squat on a mat in the courtyard below. This illumined in a sudden flash all I had often worried over while working in East Pakistan."[20]

The high-caste Hindus were too intolerant and insensitive towards the Muslims as well as the low castes of Bengal. Their life-blood was squeezed out by them. In a letter of January 18, 1828 to John Digby, a friend in England, Raja Rammohun Roy beamoned that the "present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interest. The distinction of castes, introducing innumerable divisions and subdivisions among them, has *entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling* and the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies and the laws of purification have totally disqualified them from undertaking any difficult enterprise..."[21] But the Hindus of rank are wont at discovering the hidden hands of the convenient whipping boy, the British, for every problem which they created out of their malice towards others but ultimately could not solve. Like brutes, they have mindlessly hurt the dignity of these people taking them, far too long, for granted. The result?

When Bengal was partitioned in 1905 by the then Governor-General of India, Lord Curzon, it triggered off a *swadeshi movement* which is regarded as the watershed of Indian history. The nationalist movement started there and then. In *Indian Home Rule*, Gandhiji says:

> the people were ready to resist the Partition. At that time feeling ran high. Many leading Bengalis were ready to lose their all... The spirit generated in Bengal has spread in the north to the Punjab, and in the south to Cape Comorin.[22]

The leadership of this movement was provided, among others, by Rabindranath Tagore, Surendra Nath Banerjea. But the largest Hindu caste of Eastern Bengal, Namasudras, did not join this movement despite invitation from the best sons of India. Why?

> For some generations past they (Namasudras) have shown a spirit of sturdy independence. In 1873, they proclaimed a *general strike* refusing to serve any of the upper classes, in whatever capacity, unless a better position in the hierarchy of castes was accorded to them. In more recent times, as a protest against the contemptuous treatment they received from the higher castes, they refused to the request of the members of those castes, that they should join the agitation against the partition of Bengal, and declined to take part in any movement directed against the established Government.[23]

This has invited comments from historians like Prof Sumit Sarkar that "British *divide and rule* tactics were much more successful... among the Namsudras of Faridpur".[24] According to him, they were "untouchable poor peasants who felt upper caste gentry exploitation to be nearer enemy than the distant British overlord"[25] mainly due to the 'encouragement' of a tiny group of educated men and some missionaries. In Dacca too, they resolutely remained aloof from the agitation. B.C. Allan, ICS, says :

> Till recent years, they have been regarded with great contempt by the higher Hindu castes, and as a result they resolutely declined to take any share in the agitation against the partition of Bengal. Having been treated as pariahs and outcastes, they refused to listen to the invitation of the higher caste Hindus to join a movement directed against the established Government.[26]

The learned historians do not see the hatred and contemptuous behaviour of the high-caste Hindus responsible for squeezing out patriotic feeling in these lowborn people though Raja Rammohun saw over two hundred years ago! Their malice towards them is too unsurmountable. Else, how do they expect that the social lepers would swell the ranks of their haters in the hour of their crisis only to be humiliated and kicked when the clouds of their impending crisis had blown over? They lost faith in them only after repeated instances of breach of their professions.

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WITH the annulment of the partition, the agitation came to an end. Soon thereafter, the First World War broke out furnishing opportunity for recruitment of men from Bengal for the British Army. This shows some of the high priests of Indian patriotism in their true colours. Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea, on appeal from the government, took upon himself the task of helping the British administration of Bengal recruit soldiers from the province. "I went from town to town," wrote Sir Surendra Nath, "urging my country of the better classes to enlist as soldiers and fight for the Empire which was in danger. I addressed more than thrity meetings in different parts of the province... I found myself for the first time in my public life, standing side by side and on the same platform, with high

Government officials pleading for common cause, and receiving from them the courtesy for which I was hardly prepared. We were able to raise something over 6,000 recruits, mostly from the respectable classes from Bengal."[27]

In Bengal, expressions like "better classes" and "respectable classes" are eupehmism for the so-called *bhadralok* who, in other words, are the Brahmans, Baidyas and Kayasths. Their performance in the theatres of the war has, fortunately, been recorded for the posterity by Sir Surendra Nath thus: "The quality of the recruits, it is said, did not come up to the mark."[28] This is how the Bengalis have come to be branded as a non-martial race. The great Bengali leader could not rise above narrow and petty consideration! However, the low castes whom the *bhadralok* despised as *chotalok*[29] could see through the design and discrimination.

The first ever systematic Census of Bengal in 1872 described Namasudras (then designated as Chandals) as

> hardy people, semi-amphibious almost in their habits and capable of enduring considerable exposure and fatigue to which the upcountry Hindustani would soon fall a victim.[30]

Weren't they perfect stuff for the rigours of combatant life? The *bhadraloks*, on the other hand, have most accurately been described by Lord Thomas Macaulay in his characteristic manner:

> The physical organisation of the Bangalee is feeble even to effiminacy... His pursuits are sedantary, his limbs delicate, his movment languid...Courage, independence and veracity are qualities to which his constitution is equally unfavourable.[31]

This is rightly cited as an instance of malicious outburst of pervert and over-zealous imperialist ruler against the Bengalis. But the statement is amply vidicated by their performance in the theatres of the First World War.

History has not taken note of the fact that conversion of only two castes, Namasudra and Pod, alone, both forming the bottom-line of the social life of Bengal, has turned the scale in favour of Pakistan in the East providing the Muslims in Eastern Bengal much-needed majority. E.A. Gait, ICS, records in 1901:

> The Namasudras aggregate about 1,861,000, and the Pods nearly half a million; but the full strength of the two castes is concealed by the fact that large numbers have been converted to Muhammadanism and now call themselves Shekh. There are ten and-a-half millions of Muhammadans in the Dacca and Chittagong Divisions, and it has been shown that the great majority of these are the descedants of converts from the ranks of these two castes. There must also be many converts of the same origin in the southern districts of the Presidency Division. It would probably be safe to say that at least nine millions of the Muhammadans of Bengal Proper belong to this stock.[32]

Exclude these ninety lakh descedents of the two castes, Namasudra and Pod, from the followers of Islam in Bengal, there is no leg for Pakistan to stand in Eastern Bengal. The high-caste Hindu hatred towards the less fortunate underdog bore its predictabe fruits of poison. The former, therefore, have been labouring hard to discover the hidden hands responsible for partition. They have pointed their finger to everything and everybody else than themselves.

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THE blinding prejudice and injustice against the Muslims and the low castes was considered as the strong point in certain quarters amongst the Hindus. When the Muslims stood aloof from the anti-partition agitation in 1905 which deeply angered the high caste Hindus, Rabindranath Tagore diagnosed the root cause in his characteristic righteousness and enlightenment:

> When our speakers failed in Mymensingh and other areas to win the hearts of the Mussalman peasantry, they felt very indignant. They never thought for a moment that we have never given proof of our real interest in the welfare of the Musssalmans or of the other common people of our country. We cannot, therefore, blame them if they are rather suspicious of profession of our goodwill. A brother does, of course, suffer for the sake of another brother, but if somebody just turns up from nowhere and introduces himself as a brother, he is not very likely to be straightaway shown into his share of the inheritance.

The Hindus of high order wanted others to sacrifice for their comforts and well-being without showing any concern for the sufferers. If they refused, the privileged class blamed them as the stooges of the imperialist rulers. On another occasion, Rabindranath Tagore made a startling disclosure shortly after the annulment of partition of Bengal. He indicted the contemptuous behaviour of the Hindu *swadeshi* leaders and protagonists towards the Muslim *swadeshi* leaders and followers. According to him,

> During the *swadeshi* movement, a Hindu leader did not hesitate to tell the anti-partition Muslim followers and leaders to leave the room so that he can take a glass of water; he was afraid that the presence of a Muslim rendered his drinking water impure and polluted.[34] (Translation by me—A.K.B.)

In still another essay in 1931, the poet says:

> This year, I am told, the Namasudras have joined the Muslims in striking terror against the high caste Hindus. We should deeply ponder as to why they did not show any concern for the victims.[35]

It will be only fair to say that as the majority was antagonised and the foundation of the social pyramid shaken up by dehumanising the underdogs, in that situation alone partition, in respect of Bengal at least, provided the escape-route to the top layers of Hindus.

The Hindus are gifted with an oversized narcissistic complex that they are most tolerant, liberal and catholic in their disposition towards others as against the Muslims whom they hold as barbarous, savage and cruel having converted the Indians to their faith by the power of their swords. Abu Bakr, the first "Commander of the Faith", issued the following injuction to his Army:

> Be just; the unjust never prosper. Be valiant; die rather than yield. Be merciful; slay neither old men, nor women, nor children. Destroy neither fruit trees, nor grains, nor cattle. Keep your words even to your enemy. Molest not those men who live retired from the world.[36]

Does it not sound as if issued from a prayer hall? On this the great Indian communist and intellectual giant, M.N. Roy, says:

> The irresistable march of the "Army of God" bears testimony to that this remarkable injunction was sincerely uttered by the venerable chief, and obeyed strictly by the devout followers.[37]

In the Rig Veda, in contrast, the prayer may sound shocking:

> Oh! Indra, you are a hero. Come and drink the *Soma* (intoxicant drink) we have prepared and be ready to give us wealth. *Loot the wealth of those who do not make you any offering and give the same to us.* 1.81-8-9[38] (Italics mine—A.K.B.)

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TODAY one witnesses in Calcutta vulgar scramble for display of respect, dignity, goodwill, and appreciation for the visiting Bangladeshi poets, novelists, dramatists, singers, artistes, or social workers of standing by the people of West Bengal. Alas! Had they apportioned even ten per cent of what they profess today in newspapers, meetings, radios and TV, the partition of Bengal could have been averted, no doubt with little moderation on the contemptuous attitude of high-born Hindus towards the Muslims. This parade of and pretention for respect towards them will not really win their hearts. If the Hindus really want to convince them they, first of all, have to give ample proof of their goodwill towards their own fellow underogs. Till the underdogs continue to be maltreated, the Hindu preaching of universal brotherhood will always be taken with a grain of salt. ■

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CENTENARY TRIBUTE

Rahul Sankrityayana: Monk to Marxist

RAVI M. BAKAYA

Rahul Sankrityayana (April 9, 1893-April 14, 1963), whose birth centenary is being observed this year, was a truly unique personality. A self-taught scholar, he knew almost 40 classical and modern languages. He has left behind 150 published books on such diverse subjects as philosophy, religion, history, politics, travel, biography and literature including novels, plays and short stories, apart from a large number of translations from Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan, Arabic, Tajik and other languages. According to the late Dr Prabhakar Machwe, nearly 50,000 pages of his writings have been published, while 12 manuscripts left behind by him are still to be published. In recognition of his unsurpassed scholarship he was honoured with the title of Mahapandit by the Pandit Sabha of Banaras, Tripitakacharya by the famous Buddhist University of Sri Lanka, Vidyalankara Parivena, and Sahitya Vachaspati by the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan. He was invited as a Visiting Professor to teach at the Leningrad University and the Vidyalankara Parivena of Ceylon.

Rahulji was no arm-chair scholar. He actively participated in the national movement and the peasants' movement and was jailed several times. Some of his best-known works, like the monumental 850-page *Darshan-Digdarshan* (the only Hindi book on the philosophies of the world), were written in jails. Moreover, he was an intrepid traveller and has left behind not only many accounts of his travels, but even a book on the subject *Ghumakkarshastra* (the science of vagabonding). In his travels he studied local languages, history, customs and culture and collected manuscripts, books, paintings, photographs and archaeological objects of inestimable value.

Born Kedarnath Pande in village Pandaha in the Azamgarh district of UP, Rahulji was the eldest of four sons and a daughter of an orthodox Hindu farmer, Goverdhan Pande. He lost his mother, Kulwanti Devi, when she was only 28 and was brought up by his maternal grandfather. His formal education ended with Urdu Middle in 1908 and Hindi Middle in 1909. He later studied Sanskrit in Banaras, Lahore and Ayodhya but did not take any formal degree. At the age of 16 he went to Banaras to study Sanskrit and at 20 he entered the Vaishnava order as a *virakta* (one who has renounced the world) and was to succeed the millionaire Mahanta of Parsa Math, taking the name of Ramodar Das. But his wanderlust and thirst for knowledge made him leave the *math* and he set off once again in his search for self-realisation. Under the influence of a Nepali sadhu he began the worship of goddess Durga and vowed he would end his life if she did not appear to him in person. Disappointed, he swallowed the poisonous *dhatura* but was saved by others. In Ayodhya he came in contact with the Arya Samaj and was greatly influenced by Swami Dayanand's seminal work, *Satyartha Prakash*. For several years he wandered about as an Arya Samaj *pracharak* and reached Lahore where he joined the Oriental College to continue his Sanskrit studies. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919 in neighbouring Amritsar brought him into the national movement.

He made Saran in Bihar his headquarters and attended the Congress sessions at Kanpur, Gaya and Gauhati. In 1922 he was arrested and spent six months in Buxar jail. In 1923-25 he was in Hazaribagh Central Prison as a kisan and Congress leader. The beginning of the Second World War again found him in prison in 1939 and in 1940-42 he spent several months in the notorious Deoli Detention Camp with Socialist and Communist leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan, S. A. Dange, Ajoy Ghosh and B.T. Ranadive and was later in Hazaribagh jail.

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IN his very first prison term in 1922 he wrote his utopian novel, *Baisween Sadi* (Twentysecond Century), which was published in 1923. There is no reason to believe that the 29-year old Indian knew of Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*. He predicted a world government in the twentysecond century where there would be universal equality and atrocities committed in the name of religion, caste or race would be a thing of the past.

> Man is now equal to man, men and women enjoy equal

> status. The main *mantra* is the rule of labour...there are no landlords, no rich traders, no *raja*, no *praja*, no rich, no poor, none high and none low...Everyone tries his best to produce and gather all that is needed for daily necessities according to each one's capacity...

Rahul's utopia is a world community where all arduous work is done by machines and where there is no army and no police.

For two years in 1927-28 Rahulji was a student of Buddhism and Pali at the great monastic college of Vidyalankara in Ceylon, where he also taught Sanskrit. Here he mastered the *Tripitakas* (the Buddhist scriptures) and was given the title of Tripitakacharya for his great learning in Buddhism. His friend, Harinamdas, had taken *diksha* here and become a Buddhist monk assuming the name of Bhadant Anand Kausalyayana in 1928. Rahulji took another two years to become a *bhikshu* as, in his own words, "I had to go to Tibet for which it would be necessary to change my dress, and so I did not at that time take *diksha*". (Buddhist monks wear ochre-coloured robes.)

Rahul made four trips to Tibet: in 1929, 1934, 1936 and 1938. According to his friend, the noted Orientalist, Dr Kashi Prasad Jayaswal, Rahul's physique was powerful and his mind immensely practical.

> He is capable of bearing great hardships, of walking great distances in the hills, living on any food obtainable. Last year (1936) the Commander-in-Chief of Nepal remarked to me that the route which Rahulji, followed in going to Tibet in his first journey...was so dangerous that even the Nepalese do not venture to traverse it.

During these trips to Tibet he worked for months collecting, translating, copying and photographing rare books and manuscrpits. As a result he brought back his collections on 21 mules, traversing the road from Lhasa to Kalimpong in 39 days. In 1936 he was able to bring back the original Sanskrit version of Dharmakirti's *Pramanavarttika* (which is the basis of the great Sanskrit treatises on logic—*nyaya*). This great work had long been lost and only translations of it were available. Dr Jayaswal says:

> The result of this visit (1936) has been astounding, which Prof Scherbatsky described to me in a letter as deserving the holding of an international conference to discuss the importance of the discovery and to mark the event.

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AFTER his first 15 month long Tibetan trip Rahulji became a *bhikshu* and adopted the name of Rahul Sankrityayana. On behalf of the Mahabodhi Society he then visited in 1932-33 England and other European countries where he met many noted Orientalists of England, Germany, France and Italy and worked in the British Museum and other institutions. In 1935 he spent several months in Japan, Korea and Manchuria, from where he went by train on his first visit to the Soviet Union, spending a fortnight. He wanted very much to meet Academicians Oldenburg and Shcherbatsky but the former had died and the latter lived in Leningrad and Rahulji was not given permission to go there. He returned via Baku where he saw the fire temple and then came to Lahore via Iran and Baluchistan.

Two years later he was invited by the Oriental Department of Leningrad University to teach Sanskrit and spent about two months in November 1937-January 1938 there. Now he met Academician Shcherbatsky, the greatest Buddhist scholar in the world of those days, with whom he had been corresponding since 1932. The secretary of the Indo-Tibetan Section of the Department was Yelena (Lola) Kozerovskaya who was working on a Sanskrit-Tibetan dictionary. She knew French, English and Russian and began teaching Russian to Rahulji, who in return gave her lessons in Sanskrit. Dr Prabhakar Machwe met her in Leningrad in 1972 and she told him how they fell in love during this period and that their first love letters were in Sanskrit! As a result of this union a son, Igor, was born on September 5, 1938 but Rahulji was not in Russia then and was able to see him only in July 1945 when he went as a Professor to teach in Leningrad University, this time staying there until August 17, 1947. By this time he had accepted Marxism and had joined the Communist Party of India as a kisan leader in 1939.

On his return to India in 1938 he set off on his fourth and last journey to Tibet, but not before he had completed in record time an 800-page book on the Soviet Union which he called *Soviet Bhumi*. Based on the material he had collected this large volume with 118 illustrations has not been excelled by any other book published in India since 1938 on the subject. In the preface he makes this apology:

> Haste has become my second nature in everything I do and I am guilty of the same fault in writing this book in 28 days. Because of this there are bound to be many shortcomings in this book. I think I have a right to be excused, as I am preparing to leave for Tibet. I may return in seven or eight months and had I waited a lot

> of material I have collected would have been scattered and lost...

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RAHULJI wrote on socialism, Marxism and the Soviet Union more than any other Indian author in any language, despite his preoccupations with fundamental research in Buddhism, Sanskrit and Pali texts, his frequent travels and his participation in the national and the kisan movement. After his utopian novel published in 1923, he wrote such books as *Samyavad hi kyon?* (Why only communism?) in 1934, a history of the Soviet Communist Party in 1939, a book on Soviet law and justice the same year, *What do the Communists Want?* (1953), *Ramrajya and Marxism* (1959), *Manav Samaj* (Human Society) in 1942, *Vaigyanik Bhautikvad* (Scientific Materialsm) in 1942, a book on the Chinese communes (1960) and in 1954 a series of biographies of Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Mao. He also wrote in two volumes the biographies of many young Indian leaders of the Left—*Naye Bharat ke Naye Neta* (New Leaders of New India) and translated a number of Soviet novels into Hindi. Besides, he wrote his monumental two-volume work of some 1200 pages on the history of Central Asia—*Madhya Asia ka Itihas*—in 1952, working on it for some time in Santiniketan. Drawing his material from original sources in many languages, Rahulji produced a work remarkable by any standard. He got the Sahitya Akademi award for this book from the hands of the Akademi's President, Jawaharlal Nehru, in 1959. Reviewing this work for the Sahitya Akademi's journal, Dr Bhagwat Saran Upadhyaya had this to say:

> A perusal of this remarkable work does not only make dead history return to life and comprehension of Indian history easy, but it also helps unravel many a historical knot. The great compiler and interpreter of his limitless data, which from their unbounded range in quantity make their handling extremely difficult, deserves unqualified gratitude of the reading public. The world of Hindi may take this achievement for a piece of pride, for no language either in the East or the West has produced such a work.

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RAHULJI'S contribution to Hindi literature has been the subject not only of numerous articles but also the topic of many Ph.D. theses. He wrote ten novels, four collections of short stories, eight plays and his remarkable autobiography in five volumes, some of them published posthumously. His most famous book was a collection of stories on historical-anthropological themes, *Volga se Ganga* (From Volga to Ganga), which has been translated into many languages of the world.

At Leningrad University where he taught from July 1945 to August 1947, his subjects were Sanskrit, Prakrit, Hindi, Urdu and Tibetan languages. Academician Shcherbatsky had passed away in 1942, but he now met Academician Barannikov, the famous translator of Tulsidas, *Ramayana,* and helped him in his work, as he helped a large number of other scholars like Sanskritologist Vadimir Kalyanov, Tatyana Grek of the Hermitage Museum, and Tatyana Katenina, the Marathi scholar and other teachers and research workers. His son, Igor, was now seven years old and Rahulji saw Lola again and the family was reunited but, alas, for a short period. Soviet citizens in those days were not allowed to leave the USSR and Rahulji returned to India which had now attained her independence.

The same year (1947) the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan held its annual session in Bombay from December 21 to 31 and Rahulji was elected the President of the session, a very great honour. Some portions of his presidential address did not tally with the Communist Party's line and he was sent a letter by the Central Committee to change these. He replied immediately, regretting his inability to do so as the address had already been printed and distributed. This led to a parting of ways, which was fortunate both for him and the CPI, which entered into a traumatic sectarian period at its Calcutta session in March 1948, two months later. Years later, Rahulji rejoined the CPI and was welcomed back with honour. He then wrote in his diary: "Let me and my party never be separated now!" He died in April 1963 and was spared another trauma—the split in the party that occurred in 1964. During the period he was away from the CPI he never uttered a word or wrote anything in criticism of the Party or of Marxism. He continued writing at his previous hectic pace and produced many remarkable books, including his monumental work on the history of Central Asia that we have already mentioned.

Rahulji married his secretary, Kamla, and settled down in Mussoorie where he built a house

(Continued on page 28)

After Patna By-Poll

The Left and the Right in Bihar

P.C. SINGH

While the victory of the Janata Dal in the much-awaited Patna by-election must be welcomed, the debacle of the Left (and others)-supported CPI has been unfortunate. The JD's victory in the State capital should be accepted as a welcome event, as it has been a significant pointer to the fact that the BJP's *Ram-ban* has miserably failed so far to mobilise the people of this State. The Left debacle is unfortunate from a much broader and futuristic perspective. Because, if the stronghold of the JD consolidated in terms of caste is weakened in the future, it is the BJP which may gain in strength. The graveness of this situation may be understood after realising the fact that as the Congress decline has benefited the BJP, the arm-chair thinking, ideological bankruptcy and supplementary role of the Left, and the Communist Party of India in particular, has helped in the consolidation of Laloo-led JD in Bihar.

In fact, the pre-condition for the emergence of Laloo Prasad Yadav as the unchallengeable leader was prepared by the Left-led mass movement in post-independence Bihar. In the course of the long and sustained struggle of the Left movement in different parts of the State, arose a kind of consciousness among the poor against their multi-dimensional exploitation and centuries-old plight. What, however, the Left movement failed to do is that it could not convert this 'consciousness' into a proper 'scientific class consciousness'. The CPI's claim of its stronghold in the Patna parliamentary constituency has been more 'euphoric' than 'scientific'. It is a fact that the CPI's Ramavatar Shastri got elected from this seat thrice in the past. But his source of strength lay more in the Yadav dominated character of the constituency than its class character. Though the fact cannot be denied that apart from being a Yadav, the late Ramavatar Shastri had been popular among the poor of modern Patliputra.

But in the absence of a properly developed 'class consciousness' among the poor belonging to different communities, it is the primordial relationship which shapes their political behaviour. It is not surprisisng then, that the political economy of modern Bihar speaks of 'class in itself' and 'caste for itself'. Here lies the root of the charisma of the Bihar Chief Minister. Otherwise, how to explain the fact that the same people who ensured the victory of the CPI candidate three times earlier, managed to forfeit the security deposit of a known grassroot worker—Ramnath Yadav—of the same party in the May 19 by-election?

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IT is not that the Left leadership was unaware of their demise. Yet they decided to put their own candidate as it was a matter of their tactical survival in the State politics. They knew it very well that on the question of 'social justice' their area of influence among the agricultural workers, poor peasants and share-croppers belonging to the backward castes and the Scheduled Castes is now with Laloo Prasad Yadav. And for this reason, the Left parties themselves are no less responsible. After the announcement of the politically motivated recommendation of the Mandal Commission Report by the V.P. Singh Government, the Left parties extended their more or less unqualified support to it. Whether the Left support to the idea of 'social justice' was guided by ideological ethics or purely political expediency will have to be examined carefully. But what is surprising is that the Left ideologues mocked at the bourgeois sociologists for suddenly assigning prime importance to 'class' (economic criteria) than to 'caste' so far as the question of job reservation is concerned. The dominant section of Indian sociologists have undoubtedly considered caste to be a more relevant factor to understand the traditional Indian society. However, the Left intellectuals themselves forgot the fact that by endorsing the Mandal Commission Report in toto, they would accept caste to be a more important factor than class and thus would contradict their own well-known stand. Also, by blindly endorsing the plea for reservation in terms of caste, they overlooked the substantial changes in different aspects of the Indian society brought by the forces of post-independence development. The changes in the composition of caste hierarchy, class positions and power equilibrium were very often underlined by the Left intellectuals themselves in their journalistic and academic writings. They might have realised that they had committed a blunder when the Bihar Chief Minister refused to succumb to their pressure of giving the Patna seat to the CPI. And they may have to repent in the future if Laloo Prasad Yadav refuses to give the CPI its due share in the distribution of tickets for the next Assembly election. The JD supremo in Bihar must be convinced now that he is ruling the State in his own capacity. What the outcome of the Patna by-poll shows is that Laloo Prasad Yadav does not depend upon the support of the Left for his survival.

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IN Bihar with its politics of collaborating with the Janata Dal, the Communist Party of India has lost more than what it has gained out of it. Not only has it lost its vote-bank on the issue of 'social justice', it has disillusioned its committed cadres who find no role for themselves in a political alliance dominated by the Janata Dal. However, the problem with the Communist Party of India is that it never learns out of its past experiences. As in the case of 'social justice' in the NF-LF alliance, so also on the question of Mrs Gandhi's 20-point economic programme during the Emergency, the party created seeds of its own destruction. At least from the behavioural point of view there is hardly any difference between the CPI's response to the 20-point economic programme and its perception of 'social justice'. During the Emergency, the CPI's rank and file happened to be more vocal than the common Congressmen over the progressive role of the 20-point economic programme. The party went to the extent of characterising the JP movement as an imperialist-sponsored fascist movement for which it had to apologise subsequently. But soon after the honeymoon between the CPI and the Congress was over, Mrs Gandhi accused it of being a traitor during 'Quit India' movement of 1942.

The CPI may expect similar treatment from the JD supremo in Bihar if it goes out of his clutches. But the fact is that the CPI appears to be in a helpless situation. It cannot dare to go out of the alliance as its traditional vote-bank has shifted towards the JD. And by continuing to wag its tail (as with the Congress during the Emergency) it will dig its own grave. The decision of the CPI leadership to put up its own candidate in Patna was a frustrated attempt to get out of this dilemma. Unfortunately, the outcome of the by-election in the State capital has made the Communist Party of India a harmless creature. A potential rival of the past, the CPI is now no more in a position to bargain with the JD. However, it does not mean that the Left Front as a whole will have no role to play in the politics of Bihar in the near future. So long as poverty and exploitation persist, the Left ideology will continue to attract the attention of the poor. Bihar has been one of the few States where largely owing to the massive failure of land reforms and lack of industrialisation, there has been skewed distribution of poverty and unemployment on a large scale. In such circumstances the Left has to play a role but, of course, it would be a constricted one as is evident from the latest developments.

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THE parliamentary role of the Left organisations as a whole may not be as effective as it used to be in the past. Among the Left parties, the CPI has been the most influential in securing a good number of Assembly and parliamentary seats. The CPI-M has hardly penetrated into the rural areas of the State. So far as the IPF is concerned, its origin is too recent and its area of influence has remained confined to the districts of Central Bihar. It is the CPI which could have competed with the Centrist and Right-of-the-Centre forces in the parliamentary process. But its continued character of an 'Aristotelian Creeper' which depended upon the Soviet Union (till its disintegration) in the international arena and upon the Congress, and now on the Janata Dal, within national politics has eroded its efficacy and subjected it to a severe handicap.

The political process in any State is very often guided by the social formation and pattern of economic development. The most vital reason for the continued dominance of the CPI-M in West Bengal lies in its 'hegemony' over the new middle class, despite persisting poverty and underdevelopment. From this perspective the CPI-M has an edge over the CPI. By managing to win the Tripura election, the former can still boast of its continued hold at least in a few selected areas. On the other hand, in Punjab the Communists could not grow beyond a limit mainly because of the (i) religious division among the two major segments of the population; and (ii) emergence of the rich peasantry owing to the successful implementation of the Green Revolution. The impact of the Green Revolution was felt in Bihar as well. But it stratified the peasantry in such a way that their upper layers, that is, the newly rich middle-caste peasants, hardly get attracted by the Communists' slogan. Because of a distinct place of caste in the society of Bihar (unlike Bengal and Punjab) it is the casteist and rustic tone of Laloo Prasad Yadav and not the revolutionary slogan of the Left which influences them more easily.

At least in the near future, it appears, the Left as a whole cannot compete with the Laloo-led Janata Dal in the arena of parliamentary politics. Which is why there is a greater possibility (and this has already been noted) of the political migration of the leadership from the Left to the Janata Dal. In a similar circumstance, the Indian parliamentary democracy had experienced the influx of party leaders from the Socialist camp—Ashok Mehta and Chandra Shekhar being the two notables—to the Nehru-led Congress. The only area where the Left parties in Bihar can still play some positive role is the sphere of non-parliamentary political processes. This includes trade union activities at urban-industrial centres; student and youth politics at the universities and other educational institutions; and mobilisation of the peasantry and wage-workers in rural areas. In this sphere as well, however, the more militant organisation like the Indian People's Front may prove more effective than the Communist Party of India. In the process of organising the youth and the peasants the militant approach has always had an advantage over traditional democratic ways. Recently, the IPF's performance in the university elections in UP have drawn wide attention.

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IN the arena of parliamentary politics, the Janata Dal may have outmanoeuvred the Left, but it has failed to completely check the growing influence of the Right-of-the-Centre political ideology advanced by the BJP. The declining impact of the Left and the Congress has been a shot in the arm for the BJP. The political developments in the country following the demolition at Ayodhya last year have made their impact felt in the stronghold of the Janata Dal in Bihar as well. It is largely because of this that the Bihar Chief Minister is reported to be 'not too happy' over the outcome of the Patna by-election despite the fact that he won this seat with a comfortable margin. What perhaps perturbed him most is the fact that the Koeri voters of this parliamentary constituency voted for the BJP. And a small minority from among the Kurmis are also reported to have left the boat of 'social justice'. The selection of Dr S. N. Arya (instead of S. N. Shrivastava) as the BJP candidate who is Kurmi by caste and a reputed physician, must have definitely created much more difficulty for the Bihar Chief Minister. However, from among the upper castes, the Bhumihars of Patna proper did not prefer to vote for their own caste candidate Dr C. P. Thakur of the Congress. They voted for the BJP. The only area where Dr Thakur could muster his caste support was in the outskirts of the Patna constituency and that too because of his personal influence.

These developments indicate that not only have the upper caste Congress voters shifted towards the BJP, a sizeable chunk from among the backwards have also tilted towards the *Ram mantra*. For the over-humiliated upper castemen in Bihar, the BJP is the only hope now. And the alienation of the weaker among the backwards such as the Koeris from the JD appears more pronounced because of Yadav dominance in the name of 'social justice'. Nonetheless, the Janata Dal in the State is undoubtedly in a very strong position. It can no longer be denied that in the coming future, the platform of parliamentary politics within the State may be broadly shared by the Janata Dal and the BJP. And, while the limited impact of the Left may be felt in the non-parliamentary political activities, the Congress may have to remain content as the real 'underdog' in the State's political scenario. ■

Emerging International Trading Order

The Story of the Uruguay Round

S.P. SHUKLA

This is a comprehensive and unique account and analysis of the Uruguay Round by one of the major players from the inception, until recently. The author, a former Finance Secretary of India, was India's Permanent Representative to GATT at Geneva for several years, and is credited with playing a leading role in formulating the South's position on different aspects of the Round until recent years. He presents here a historical background of the Round's evolution in terms of North-South issues at the initial, middle and end phases of the negotiations. The article also provides a critique of the Draft Dunkel Text and analyses the current status of the Round for the South. It is being reproduced—with due acknowledgement and the author's consent—from Third World Economics, *published fortnightly from Penang, Malaysia by the Third World Network, a grouping of organisations and individuals involved in Third World and Development issues. This article is being carried in two issues of* Mainstream. —Editor

I: Introduction

The Uruguay Round (UR) is not simply one more round of multilateral trade negotiations (MTN) following the previous seven rounds of such negotiations under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). What distinguishes the UR negotiations from the previous GATT rounds is the new paradigm that has been forced on these negotiations by the industrialised countries.

The previous rounds were carried out essentially within what can be described as 'the border paradigm'. Their scope and substance were confined to the trade issues, practices and disciplines which impinged on the transactions at the international border. There were, of course, a few exceptions. For example, Article IV of GATT deals with the norms relating to the utilisation of the screening time as between the films of national origin and the foreign films; or the Code on Government Procurement which emerged in the Tokyo Round lays down an international discipline in the matter of purchases of stores, equipment and services by the government entities.

But these exceptions did not alter the character and content of the border paradigm which governed the MTNs. The previous rounds of MTNs, by and large, did not concern themselves with policies or transactions which were recognised as falling within the domain of the sovereign economic space of the participating countries. The UR has completely changed the situation. These negotiations have entered substantially into the domain of the sovereign economic space.

The industrialised countries have sought to bring about this paradigm change in three ways. First, they insisted on bringing the so-called "new issues" of services, investment and intellectual property protection on the agenda of the negotiations. Second, they elaborated on a selective approach to the definition of negotiating objective in different areas. Last, they worked for an integrated enforcement mechanism for various areas under negotiations.

While the indication on the new issues to be negotiated was available as early as the beginning of 1982, the clear profile of the agenda emerged over a period of over four years, filled with controversies, moves and countermoves and tortuous negotiations at formal as well as informal levels. It was not before September 1986 that the new round could be launched with as many as fifteen different areas of negotiations. The negotiating mandates that emerged were full of checks and balances, compromises and caveats, nuances and emphases which represented the play of pulls and counterpulls exerted by the participants. One such play, by no means the least, was between a few developing countries on the one hand, and the industrialised countries, with the USA at the helm, on the other.

The launching of the UR was surrounded by a controversy never before witnessed in the history of GATT. The launching of no previous round was preceded by a gestation period of four and a half years and such acute labour pain. The reasons are not far to seek. The stakes were high for all and the perception of the high stakes was acute on all sides.

II: Why the North Moved, How the South Defended

The USA was losing its competitive edge in manufacturing. Its steel, automobile, machine tools, electronics industries were no longer the world leaders. Japan and Germany had posed the threat for sometime. Now, South Korea, Brazil, Taiwan, Singapore were entering the world scene in increasingly more sophisticated industries. The import competition faced by the US industries was becoming more and more acute. The EEC's emergence as a mega exporter of agricultural products was threatening the American share in the world market for agricultural products.

The US perceived its strength in the services area, particularly as it was in a leading position in informatics and telecommunication. What it was losing in manufacture, it sought to make up by capturing markets for its services industries. This required that the whole spectrum of activities relating to the service industry, comprising investment, production, distribution, repatriation of profits should be brought within the scope of negotiations.

Also, it followed that the state intervention for considerations of social priorities and social direction that the national governments may wish to adopt, should be treated as mere barriers to trade and, therefore, dismantled through the process of negotiations. The model of tariff negotiations was sought to be transposed to this area of negotiations, with little thought to either its theoretical infirmity or practical inequity.

Since among the industrialised countries there was already a forum for such negotiations in the shape of the OECD and even some kinds of regimes governing or guiding some of these activites, the real objective of the new round of negotiations was to capture the markets of the developing countries. Moreover, if the export access for the goods of the developing countries in the markets of the industrialised countries were to be made conditional on the former giving access in their markets to the service industries of the latter, the opening up process would be so much easier. Hence the enormous importance attached by the USA to the services issue and to making services an integral part of the GATT system.

The issue of intellectual property rights was important for the industrialised countries as they have a near monopoly of knowledge and technology. They would like to strengthen their hold by perpetuating the monopolistic position through raising the patent and copyright protection level the world over. They would not like to see the newcomers emerging to threaten their position. The prevailing and potential national regimes which restrict or may seek to restrict patent monopolies and which endeavour or may endeavour to strike a new balance between the rights of the patent holder and the public interest, according to the national requirements and goals, would need to be revised and contained, as necessary. That such an approach was patently protectionist, anti-competition and anti-liberalisation did not deter the industrialised countries from adopting this selective definition of negotiating objective in this area.

The transnational corporations would also like to have a free regime for moving capital in search of higher profits without let or hindrance of the national governments who may have their own ideas of national goals or social priorities. Hence the need to bring the investment regimes of the developing countries on the agenda. Their approach to negotiations in this area is similar to that in the services area, that is to say, all the regulatory activity and measures that pose as barriers should be negotiated away.

The developing countries perceived the danger that was posed by the proposed launching of this new round of negotiations to the very autonomy of their policy-making in areas central to their economic development. They fear that the integration of their markets with that of the industrialised countries, may not bring about much benefits to their economies but instead create further unequal interdependence between the two worlds.

Fairly early in the game, the developing countries adopted a multipronged strategy. Since they did not perceive much positive beenfit from the proposed new round, they implicitly adopted the strategy of delaying it. But overtly the stance was far more sophisticated and nuanced. When they found that the substantive negotiations on the question of launching of the round could no longer be stalled, they took the high ground and laid out their own agenda for the new round. This agenda was essentially the agenda for putting the GATT house in order.

The GATT system was coming under severe strain. The disputes before the GATT panels were getting prolonged. There was increasing tendency on the part of the powerful trading entities to resort to bilateral arrangements, outside the framework of GATT, to settle specific issues of trade tension. The 'Grey area' measures involved selective restriction of those very trade flows which the normal operation of the GATT rules should have encouraged. Since such measures were technically not falling foul of the GATT rules, their continuation and proliferation went unchallenged.

The textile trade provided older and more blatant example of anti-GATT practices being legitimised and extended from time to time through successive reincarnations of the Multi Fibre Agreement (MFA). While the textile trade was moving freely amongst the industrialised countries, the exports of textiles from the most competitive sources, such as, some developing countries, were being subjected to discriminatory, quantitiative restrictions of a most cumbersome character in the markets of industrialised countries. The trade in agriculture continued to be distorted by heavy, competitive subsidisation of production and exports in industrialised countries.

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AGAINST this background, the developing countries led by Brazil and India urged that the new round concentrate on evolving an effective safeguard discipline based on the fundamental principles of GATT, ending the MFA and integrating the textile trade with GATT, and calling a halt to competitive subsidisation of agricultural production and exports by industrialised countries. Moreover, in order to build confidence in the multilateral process, the new round should start with a strict commitment on the 'standstill' and the 'rollback'. In other words, all participants should agree not to take any unilateral measures that were not permissible under GATT, to increase restrictions during the pendency of the negotiations and to agree to rollback those that were already in force.

The logic of this stand was unequestionable. It could not be dismissed as negative. Initially the developing countries were united on it. Had this unity endured in the years to follow, the course of subsequent events could have been quite different. The developing countries could have been in a better position to derive benefits on the issues of their concern; they could also have defended their stand on 'new issues' from a position of strength.

But the events unfolded in a different way. The years 1985 and 1986 witnessed increasing bilateral pressures on many developing countries. The capacity to withstand such pressures was not uniform in the developing world. Moreover, the fear of immediate adverse implication for trade with or aid from the industrialised countries weighed far more with the decision-makers than the perception of the long-term threat to autonomous policy-making in the economic sphere. The possibility of unilateral action by a major trading entity like the USA withdrawing the GSP benefit or even sanctioning retaliation, further contributed to the weakening of the resolve of many. Most importantly, the political equations which finally determined the stance of the participants in the trade negotiations varied substantially for different developing countries.

The net result was that on the eve of the Ministerial Meeting convened at Punta-del-Este in September 1986 to consider launching the new round, the developing world was split. A small group of ten countries led by India and Brazil and containing important countries such as Egypt, Yugoslavia, Argentina, Nigeria, Tanzania, Peru, Cuba and Nicaragua held fast to their earlier stand whereas the rest of them either explictly or impplicitly went along with the proposals mooted by the industrialised countries with some modifications as in the case of agriculture and some strengthening as in the case of tropical products. However, the industrialised countries, particularly the USA, was not able to get a 'consensus' on its proposals on the new round. The Punta-del-Este Meeting, therefore, started in an atmosphere of great controversy, if not confrontation.

One of the important contributing factors which helped the small group of ten developing countries led by India and Brazil to hold on to their stand in the face of the US opposition and despite the serious split in the developing world, needs to be recognised. In the period leading to the Punta-del-Este Ministerial Meeting, India and Brazil had succeeded in developing a degree of understanding with the EEC on the issues of mutual concern. It should be remembered here that the EEC's position on the services issue had not fully emerged by that time. They were making internal assessments of their relative strength and their future potential in different service industries. They had some serious concerns also, for example, the implications of the cultural "invasion" by the US audio-visual media; the future of their state-run monopolies of PT & T; their relative strength in the fields of civil aviation and banking and other financial services. More important, they knew very well that once the new round started, the heat would be on them as far as the negotiations on agriculture were concerned. All in all, the EEC showed a degree of understanding and sympathy for the concerns which India and Brazil had on the new round and the new issues.

Against this background, it was possible for India and Brazil to work out with the EEC the outline of a possible compromise which would be mutually acceptable. With this understanding, the task of the group of ten countries led by India and Brazil in facing the US opposition as well as finally working out a new consensus at the Punta-del-Este meeting became achievable.

III: Nature of the Punta Compromise

What were the essential features of the Punta Compromise? First, India and Brazil who were, in principle, opposed to having negotiations on the services issue finally gave in. But they insisted that negotiations in this area should be conducted along the lines of the understanding they had earlier worked out with the EEC; that the service negotiations will be conducted outside the juridical framework of GATT. Moreover, the mandate for the negotiations should recognise that the development of the developing countries and the growth of all countries should be the objective of these negotiations and not "liberalisation" or "dismantling of barriers" *per se* as the US would have it. The transsparency and progressive liberalization could only be conditions or means of achieving the goals. However, there should be a commitment to respect the policy objectives of the national regulations governing the service areas.

The Punta-del-Este mandate for negotiations on trade in services clearly recognised all these elements. By providing for a separate stream of negotiations for services outside the juridical framework of GATT, the coercion through cross-retaliation was kept at bay. By introducing the goal of development and the explicit requirement of respecting national regulations, the paradigm change sought to be introduced was blunted. The question of definition and coverage was kept open so as to counterbalance the bias in favour of capital-intensive and technology-intensive services implicit in the initiative of the proponents by introducing labour-intensive services and labour flows within the universe of negotiations.

As regards the question of intellectual property rights, the agreed mandate followed the approach already incorporated in Article XX (d) of GATT. In this provision on General Exceptions, it has been recognised that the countries, may pursue their own regimes on patents, copyrights, etc. but it has been stipulated that measures to enforce such regimes should not be applied in a manner which would constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination between countries or disguised restriction of international trade. The question of "effective and adequate protection of intellectual property rights" which the US wanted as the negotiating objective was relegated in the mandate to the position of a mere factor to be taken into account.

On the question of investment regimes, the mandate was somewhat restrictive in that it was confined to the examination of the operation of GATT articles related to trade restrictive and distorting effects of investment measures. But it also visualised elaboration of further provisions, if necessary, to avoid adverse effects on trade.

Finally, the Punta-del-Este declaration launching the negotiations kept on hold the entire question of integrating the disciplines on the new issues with GATT by effecting juridical separation of the stream of negotiations on services and by leaving open the question of international implementation of the respective results for a decision at the time of the conclusion of the negotiations.

On the question of the GATT issues proper, the Punta-del-Este declaration did lay considerable emphasis on 'standstill' and 'rollback'. It also included the question of integrating the textile trade with GATT as an important area of negotiations. So did it incorporate the question of evolving a comprehensive agreement on safeguards.

Considering the negotiating objectives set for themselves by the industrialised countries, particularly the USA, taking into account the vision of the new global economic order which the transnational corporations are striving for, recognising the inherent weakness of the Third World in such negotiations and bearing in mind the open split within the Third World in the run-up to the Ministerial Meeting at Punta-del-Este, the compromise that finally emerged cannot be said to be loaded too much against the interests of the Third World. The new issues did enter the agenda but in a manner which limited the potential damage to the sovereign economic space of the Third World. The intellectual property matters and investment regimes could be brought in only tangentially, more in the nature of elaborating on the disciplines already prevailing in GATT. The issue of common enforcement mechanism through cross-retaliation was kept at bay. The textile trade was brought in with a view to its ultimate integration into GATT and the industrialised countries agreed to take on the standstill and rollback commitments.

IV: The State of Play Up to Montreal 1988

But this success was rather shortlived. This was so partly because of the persistence of the inherent weakness of the Third World which was exposed in the period leading to the launching of the new round and partly because the industrialised countries had been able to establish bridgeheads in the battle on the new issues. The post-Punta-del-Este period witnessed not a process of working out of compromises but a battle of attrition and rapid weakening of the will of the developing countries.

This period is marked by two distinct phases. The first which corresponds to the phase of attrition extends from September 1986 to December 1988, that is, up to the Mid-term Ministerial Review Meeting held in Montreal. The second which corresponds to progressive weakening of the will of the group of the developing countries led by Brazil and India, commences in January 1989 and covers the subsequent period up-to-date. In this latter period, April 1989 constitutes a watershed representing the Geneva accord on the intellectual property rights. Let us first look at the developments in the first phase.

The First Phase

As soon as the negotiating process started in Geneva after the launching of the round in Punta-del-Este, the dormant designs started surfacing, particularly in the areas of intellectual property rights and investment regimes. This inevitably led to progressive build-up of tensions between the core countries of the ten country combination, notably India and Brazil on the one hand, and the leading industrialised countries, the USA and Japan in particular, on the other.

It was in June 1988 that the pharmaceutical industries of the USA, Japan and Europe comprising leading transnational corporations brought out a volume titled, *Basic Framework of GATT Provisions on Intellectual Property*. It was the first clear and coherent statement on what was implied when the industrialised countries used the terms such as "adequate" and "effective" standards for protection of intellectual property rights. This formulation went far beyond the scope of the laborious work that went on for years on the harmonisation of standards of patent protection initiated in the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), the rightful UN organisation in whose jurisdiction lie the substantive questions of the standards of protection of intellectual property rights.

Also, while the WIPO was quite realistic and cautious in suggesting first, tentative approximations to possible dispute settlement procedure in this complex area, the business coalition of pharmaceutical industry straightaway suggested the GATT dispute settlement procedures and GATT trade retaliatory sanctions for resolving the disputes on intellectually property protection. There was an uncanny similarity between the stand put forward on behalf of the US delegation in the negotiations and the stance taken by this business coalition. In the course of time, the views of the business coalition were more or less fully incorporated in the stand of the leading industrialised countries participating in the negotiations.

India and Brazil had fought hard to prevent substantive matters relating to intellectual property protection being brought within the purview of the GATT negotiations. Moreover, they had their national legislation designed specially to weaken the monopolistic hold of foreign patent holders in crucial areas and to promote indigenous industry and research. Any negotiations on the lines put forward by the industrialised countries were sure to lead to substantial dilution of their national legislation on patent matters.

For this they had no mandate. Nor did they consider the trade body such as GATT and the negotiations carried on by trade experts as the appropriate forums for negotiations on substantive matters of intellectual property protection. Most important, they felt that the efforts on the part of the industrialised countries to substantially alter and extend the mandate agreed upon at the

Punta-del-Este meeting, so soon after the event, raised the question of breach of faith, casting shadow on the credibility of the negotiating process.

The story regarding the negotiations on the trade related investments measures was not substantially different. The difference, if any, was that Japan took the lead in pressing hard the process of extending the mandate and bringing in the whole gamut of the investment regime under the rubric of multilateral negotiations.

The third area which assumed growing importance and also became one of the most contentious issues under negotiations related to agriculture. The tension was mainly confined to the EEC on the one hand, and the group of major exporters of agricultural products such as Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, Uruguay, Thailand, Canada and some other countries led by the USA, on the other.

But the process of negotiations started creating serious implications for countries like India, China, Egypt and Nigeria also. For one thing, the mould of negotiating objectives and techniques was being designed carefully to suit the requirements of these two major contenders. For another, both the contenders, although on the opposite side of the negotiating table shared some common features. Their approach was highly trade-oriented. The share of agriculture in the gross domestic product of these countries was relatively small. So was the proportion of the workforce dependent on agriculture. The questions of food security were relatively much less significant.

In contrast, for countries like China and India, the agriculture sector accounted for a much larger share of their gross domestic product and a much larger proportion of their workforce depended on agriculture for their livelihood. The process of development of their agriculture was central to their overall development. Because of the enormous populations, and the relatively larger proportion of their average household budget being spent on food items, the question of self-sufficiency in food was an imperative of their independent existence. For countries like Egypt and Nigeria who were large importers of food, the progressive reduction of subsidised food production in the industrialised countries implied higher prices of imported food.

These kinds of questions were outside the pale of the concern of the major contenders in this area of negotiations. Nevertheless, India, China, Egypt, Nigeria did raise these questions and made efforts to introduce caveats and clauses seeking consideration of the issues of their concern.

Textiles

In the area of textiles, this phase witnessed a lot of foot-dragging on the part of the industrialised countries. They were not easily agreeable to visualise the end of MFA. They tried to bring in the counterquestion of restrictions on import of textiles prevalent in the developing countries, although such restrictions originated in the balance of payments difficulties and not in any protectionist policies and were fully GATT-consistent. The net result was that progress in this area was not very rapid.

In the area of services, this phase witnessed tortuous negotiations and also some progress. By the time the Montreal review meeting ended, a fairly balanced outline of issues and principles, guidelines and programme of negotiations emerged. The profile of the outcome showed a measure of understanding of the development dimension. The question of definition and sectoral coverage was so elaborated as to maintain a fair balance between the concerns of industrialised and developing countries. The role of national regulatory mechanism was recognised. The question of national treatment was made subject to the question of access. In other words, if a country chose not to open an area of services for access to the operators of other countries, there could be no question of extending national treatment. In other words, the participating countries could retain a fair degree of freedom in the matter of opening up of specific sectors of service industries to foreign operators.

In the run up to the Montreal meeting in December 1988, the differences in many fields including intellectual property, services and agriculture could not be resolved and the issues remained wide open for possible resolution at the meeting itself. As stated earlier, the services area saw a faily balanced agreement emerging at Montreal. But that was not the case in the other areas. Since the differences on agriculture between the two major contenders remained wide, the Montreal meeting collapsed. There were intense pressures mounted at this meeting to substantially alter and extend the Punta-del-Este mandate on intellectual property matters. But the firm stand taken by India and Brazil led to preservation of the respective positions as before. No consensus could emerge and these issues too were left to the Geneva machinery to be sorted out.

(To be continued)

The Ten Commandments

PUSHPA M. BHARGAVA

This contribution from Dr Bhargava, who is a distinguished scientist, is taken from his intervention at the Media Dialogue on Communal Violence at Hyderabad (June 21, 1993) organised jointly by the Namedia Foundation, Department of Journalism, Osmania University and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. —Editor

Today, as we prepare to enter the twentyfirst century, the role of the media must change. It should not only inform accurately—it is important not to suppress facts—but it must also help readers, viewers or listeners to convert the information into knowledge and then knowledge into wisdom.

This would require annotation of the information communicated, and its analysis; it would require putting events that are being reported into a perspective—often a historical perspective. In fact, publication of news of communal violence without any annotation or analysis could do—and does—much social harm. Having said this, may I now point out some pillars of the framework of knowledge in which the media could handle communal violence. What I wish to do is to enunciate a 10-point programme—ten points that the media should be concerned with and use for annotation and analysis of information and news of communal violence.

1. Man is born a non-violent animal. The proof of this is that genes seem to exist that appear to make an individual violent under certain conditions. This was perhaps the case with the Boston Strangler of the 1960s. That was probably the reason that he was a compulsive murderer who had no other motive excepting to murder by strangling. The fact is that very few individuals in the society have such an aberrant genetic make-up, and they must be considered as abnormalities. To others who constitute the vast majority, peace comes naturally. And that is the biological truth. Thus, violence is an imposition—an imposition by vested interests, be they of the government or of the political parties. Such an imposition on the peaceful nature of man that leads to violence, benefits only a few; most people lose out.

2. No one has a religion at the time of birth. There is no way to identify anyone as a Hindu or a Muslim or a Christian or a Sikh, excepting by accepting what he or she says. There are thus no genetic markers for any religion. My last name is Bhargava and Bhargavas call themselves Brahmins. I, however, call myself as one who has no religion or caste whatsoever. The only identity I seek is that of an Indian—thus putting me in a minority that should really come within the purview of the Minority Commission. When my other Bhargava friends call themselves Brahmins, I ask them what is the proof? The fact is that there is none, for castes have no genetic markers. On the other hand, races have sometimes well-identified (but never universal, that is, present in all or almost all members of a race) genetic markers, but race is not religion. Thus within the same race, we may have people belonging to different religions as we have, for example, in Africa. Even in the case of races where there may be some genetic markers, there is evidence that, unless there has been very considerable in-breeding and the group size is very small, genetically determined capabilities are randomised and thus get evenly distributed between the races.

3. Violence of any kind—certainly including communal violence—has never solved any problem. In our country, Mahatma Gandhi realised this and gave us an alternative that worked and solved a major problem. Even wars that involve large-scale violence, are not won today by such violence or the ability to perpetrate it on the strength of arms. They are won primarily by the justifiability of the cause for which people might be fighting and the determination of the people. An outstanding example would be Vietnam which surely was one of the most deprived countries of the world when it defeated three major powers. I recall a meeting in Hanoi with Gen. Giap, the legendary hero of the Dien-Bien-Phu battle, when he laid much emphasis on the above point.

4. In today's world, religion is *not* the major uniting force. Religion has two components: the ethical and the dogmatic. As regards the ethical component, virtually all major codified religions seem to converge towards the same set of ethical values. It is the dogma that distinguishes one religion from another. As time passes by, more and more of all religious dogma—irrespective of the religion—are being shown to be untenable. In the united Pakistan, a vast majority had the same religion; yet, they split into Pakistan and Bangladesh following a bloody war. The recent Iran-Iraq war was fought between two Muslim countries. And in the last World War, many of the countries that fought each other were predominantly Christian. Today, profession is a much greater binding force than religion. This is very much true, for example, of scientist. *Good* scientists all over the world today form a community in which religious considerations are non-existent. We should remember that one of the remarkable events of this half century has been the tremendous increase in the facilities for communication and travel, which have brought people all over the world closer. As a consequence, humanism has become a more durable binding force than religion.

5. We must realise that no freedom can ever be absolute. This is something which can be demonstrated scientifically in many ways. In other words, every legitimate freedom must be circumscribed by legitimate constraints. This would apply as much to religious freedom as to any other kind of freedom. Thus, I do not understand why people should have the freedom to take out religious processions. Why should temples be allowed to loudly advertise their wares through high-power loudspeakers at all odd times of the day and night, thus causing much disturbance? Why should we permit religion to be brought to the streets? Why can't it be an entirely personal matter confined only to one's own house or place of worship? Why should it be permitted to have anything to do with politics or even economics? Why could not we frame adequate laws to ensure that religious freedom is duly constrained just as we must ensure that people are free to profess any religion they like?

6. We must emphasise that religion and culture have nothing to do with each other—absolutely nothing whatsoever. There is no Hindu culture or Muslim culture or Christian culture in our country. There is just Indian culture: there is only Indian music, Indian painting, Indian literature and Indian folklore. All these creative activities transcend religion. Many of them, like science, are today in fact far more international than national. Thus Hindus of Bali have much less in common with what the Hindus of India have with Muslims and Christians of India.

7. We must point out as to who gains by communal violence. Indeed, very few. And those who gain would fall into two categories: (a) those who are in power and would like to use this power for personal gain; and (b) those who are aspirants to such positions of power. The community as a whole never gains through religious or communal violence. Indeed, there is not a single instance of such gain.

8. We must openly discuss and comment on techniques that are used to incite and instigate religious or communal violence. Many of these techniques have now become clear, and they must be repeatedly discussed. In fact, we are today in a position to anticipate the development of new techniques of inciting communal violence, and they must be discussed and taken note of through the media so that people are made wary and do not fall victims to them unknowingly.

9. We must bring as much pressure as possible on the government to remove *de facto* discrimination on communal basis or on the basis of religion or caste. Thus, why must we have different marriage laws for different groups? Why cannot we prescribe that in the eyes of law, the marriage would be legal only when it is registered? The rest can be a personal matter. Why could not we prescribe that all divorces will be governed by just one law in the country? What prevents us from making sure that the laws that govern inheritance are the same for every citizen of India? We surely do not have different laws in regard to murder for different communities, giving some communities greater right to murder than the others.

10. We must emphasise the consequences and the follow-up of communal violence. We must describe the misery that it brings to people by taking individual cases of the victims. We must make the point: was it necessary? Mere description of communal violence in the media without a follow-up has been, I think, a major disaster in the country.

Conclusions

To conclude, communalism makes no scientific sense. Violence makes no scientific sense. Communal violence is as senseless as anything can be. We are born without any religion. We are born with a desire to be peaceful. It is the political and vested interests—vested interests of those who are in power or who want power to exploit the people—that generate conditions that lead to violence, including communal violence. We must be wary of such people and the media must help make people-at-large acquire the ability to identify such people and groups.

In the long run, of course, it will be necessary to change the process of acquisition of power. ■

Nelson Mandela Is 75

HARI SHARAN CHHABRA

Nelson Mandela turns 75 on July 18. Having spent the best of his years (as many as 27) in prison, he has now been free for nearly three-and-a-half years. But not on one occasion did he give the impression of compromising his well-known qualities of courage, conviction and commitment.

As he took his first steps to freedom, he left no one in doubt that he had not asked for his release. His first call to his countrymen was for the intensification of the struggle against apartheid. "We have waited too long for our freedom. Now is the time for the intensification of the struggle on all fronts," he told tens of thousands of people who welcomed him on February 11, 1990 at the Grand Parade in Cape Town.

In no time South Africans of all hues came to realise that Mandela does not have feet of clay, none could fault his dignity and determination. The sufferings he has gone through in prison and the price he has paid for freedom dimmed neither his physical and mental strength, nor his moral courage in the pursuit of a just order for the Black majority. He remains as ever a man with steel nerves.

Those of us who had the honour of meeting him in India and in South Africa have been greatly impressed with the fine fettle he is in. He looks much younger than his 75 years, his smile is mesmerising, his voice youthful.

But age is catching on and there are, therefore, concerns about Mandela's health. His virtuoso performances in South Africa and on his extensive foreign tours, however, dispel all doubts about his health. In any case, the ANC leadership does not appear to attach any importance to its legendary leader's advancing age.

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MANDELA'S national stature is unchallenged, but what is more important is his standing in the international community as the foremost Black statesman of the African continent. His grasp over all kinds of issues is astounding.

Mandela is a factor and a phenomenon in South African politics and is, therefore, considered the odds-on favourite to become the President of democratic South Africa following next April's elections in which the Blacks will vote for the first time. He is the one who will definitely head a government of national unity. That may bring to an end three hundred years of illegal White minority rule and racial oppression.

Mandela visited Britain early this May as a guest of the UK Government. This is how *West Africa*, a prestigeous weekly published from London, graphically described his visit in an editorial:

> Mandela came, he saw and he conquered would be an apt summation of the ANC leader's visit to the UK...Looking every bit like the President-in-waiting, that many assume him to be, Mr Mandela's arrival at the airport was reported on television, he addressed a well-attended Press conference, met both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, and spoke to members of both Houses of Parliament. He could not have hoped for a more successful British reception in a country where visiting African leaders are usually not acknowledged in the media.

As the future ruler of democratic South Africa, what is most impressive about Mandela is that he mixes firmness with compromise, whenever the situation demands; his only interest being the speedy march towards democracy. On the question of nationalisation, he has now a pragmatic approach, because he does not want to frighten the White business. He is never tired of telling foreign investors that the ANC had "issued an investment code which provides that there will be expropriation of the property of investors".

In a major concession to the Right-wingers led by the Inkatha Freedom Party, the ANC (the ruling party-in-waiting) has agreed that the 26-party negotiating forum would draw up an interim Constitution and that the principles embodied in that Constitution on federalism and powers for the regions would be binding on the Constitution-writing body to be elected next April.

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NOTHING bothers Mandela more than the

escalating and unremitting violence in South Africa. But it is his clear-sightedness and his appeal for peace which managed to prevent the bloodshed from becoming even worse following the destardly assassination of Chris Hani, the idol of the Black youth. No one is more aware than the ANC leader that a peaceful political climate is essential for democracy and for progress in tackling the country's socio-economic problems.

Mandela is also doing his best to allay the fears that an ANC Government would favour any particular population group in South Africa.

> We are a non-racial organisation and we have long since stopped thinking in terms of colour.

It is pertinent to note that immediately after his release, he offered a hand of friendship to the 5.5 million Whites in South Africa:

> Whites are fellow South Africans and we want them to feel safe and we appreciate the contribution they have made to the development of the country.

Mandela is also never tired of assuring the 1.2 million South African Indians that they will have no problems in post-apartheid South Africa. In a recent statement he said:

> Any feeling of anxiety as to what the fate of Indians is going to be in our country is unfounded.

Let us also recall Mandela's words during the treason trial way back in 1964:

> I have fought against White domination and I have fought against Black domination. I have carried the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunity. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and achieve. But, if need be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.

The international community has already begun recognising him the ruler of post-apartheid South Africa, which is clearly borne out by the fact that he alone can give a call for the lifting of the remaining economic sanctions against South Africa. This may come any time.

Mandela has been touring the United States early in July trying to collect funds for the ANC's election campaign, but his bigger effort has been to drum up foreign investments and international development aid to give a boost to his country's battered economy, when the unemployment rate in the formal job market is 40 per cent.

Washington has lifted most of the sanctions against South Africa, the only remaining one is that the US has to recommend to the World Bank and IMF to start providing aid to South Africa. To be sure, Bill Clinton is waiting for a nod from Mandela.

As South Africa nears the goal of majority rule, Mandela faces the hour of truth. Many in South Africa and ouside point to the disastrous political and economic conditions throughout the African continent in the post-independence period, and fear the same for South Africa under Black rule. Can South Africa be an exception? ■

RAVI BAKAYA: Rahul Sankrityayana

(Continued from page 15)

in 1950. In 1953 his daughter, Jaya, and in 1955 son, Jeta, were born. In 1958 he spent four and a half months in China. In 1959 the family shifted to Darjeeling. In 1959-61 he was Professor of Philosophy in Sri Lanka. On his return he suffered a stroke in Calcutta in December 1961 from which he never recovered. He lost his memory completely; years of hard work had taken their toll. He was taken to the Soviet Union for treatment and now Lola and son Igor came to see him, but he could not recognise anyone. In March his wife, Kamla, accompanied him back to Darjeeling. He died here on April 14, 1963, five days after his seventieth birthday.

He was described in these picturesque words by his friend, Dr Jayaswal, in an article in 1937 that appeared in the *Modern Review* :

> Rahul Sankrityayana as I know him today (is) a man resembling the Buddha, a man absolutely free from hostility to any living man, universal in his outlook, absolutely calm, to whom children run up instinctively, to whom man would respond as to Christ or Gautama if he said: 'Follow me'.

Today, when there is so much talk of combining Marxism with the conditions of one's own country, one misses scholars like Rahul Sankrityayana. He often quoted Buddha on questions of ideology:

> O Kalamo, doubt is the father of truth. Never take a thing to be true because you have heard it, nor because tradition tells you so, nor because it is ceritified by your scriptures, nor because you find the personality of one who utters it attractive, nor because the person is your respected teacher. Kalamo, when your reason tells you that something is true and good, then accept it and follow it.

How well these words resemble Marx's favourite motto: "Doubt everything!" Ideology, Rahul used to say, is not for carrying on one's head; it should be used as a boat to take one to one's goal. ■

Judicial Foothold for Democracy in Pakistan

NILOFAR RIZVI

Pakistan Premier Nawaz Sharif's dismissal from power is not as great a news-making epoch as its overturn by the country's Supreme Court. Earlier, Z.A. Bhutto, Junejo and Benazir Bhutto did not witness the reversal of their removal from office judicially, legislatively, militarily or by the people's verdict. When Prime Minister Z.A. Bhutto was overthrown and put behind bars by a 1977 coup organised by General Mohammed Ziaul Haq, Bhutto's trial led to his execution. Junejo as the Premier under Zia's Presidency was expected to be only a yes-man to his boss. His dismissal in 1988 barely created any ripple in the politics of Pakistan. In fall 1990, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto was fired by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan to be tried in court. The critics termed her removal as a "constitutional" or a "soft" coup. Sharif's dismissal followed by his return to power on legal grounds marks a positive move in Pakistan's progress towards democracy.

The wave of democratic fervour in Pakistan had been initiated by Benazir Bhutto's entry into power. Her predecessor, Zia, a general of the army had given himself the title of the President and had set himself at the pinnacle of all power and authority, military and civilian. In contrast, Benazir and her successor, Sharif, were elected as Prime Ministers. President Khan had assumed the office of the President after Zia's death in 1988, and still holds it.

From the beginning Bhutto's hold on power was rather insecure. Despite there being a wave of sympathy, her party could not win an absolute majority in the parliament. The then ruling Pakistan People's Party had majority only in the National Assembly, the Opposition party Islamic Democratic Alliance controlling the other House of the parliament—the Senate. Benazir Bhutto had a very loose control over the instruments of political control and pillars of government. Not a single bill could be passed through the parliament under her word alone. Ethnic disturbances and riots in Pakistan also assumed serious proportions. In part, these were due to the exit of the feared and powerful ruler, Zia. His death gave incentive to the destabilising factions that had seen lying low for a long time. Moreover, Bhutto has entered office in a political set-up not prepared for the sudden transition from military to civilian rule; in this process of socialisation, neither the ruling nor the ruled classes had come to grips with real democracy.

The author is a free-lance journalist based in Texas, USA.

The corruption charges against Benazir cannot also be ignored. Among the Pakistani public her husband came to be known as Mr Ten Percent, because of his alleged corrupt practicses such as taking bribes. The corruption charges served to expedite Bhutto's exit from power. Lacking these; the weakness of Benazir's government, the continued dominance of particularly the army, and diminishing support of the people meant she may have at best lingered on a little longer. She entered politics riding the crest of popularity; however, her 20 months of rule could not keep her atop for too long. Whille out of power, her attempts to reclaim the lost affection of Pakistan's public have not been successful. Her endeavours, for instance, in 1992 to topple Nawaz Sharif from power through organisation of rallies to force new elections did not succeed. Expressing support to President Khan's dismissal of the Sharif Government has further discredited Benazir's standing at home and abroad.

◆

WHILE Benazir Bhutto was in office, the President's powers were not substantially curtailed or abolished. In terms of formal powers, the position of the Prime Minister continued to be as insignificant as it had been formerly. The difference being that the Prime Minister was no longer considered as simply a mouthpiece of the President, as he had been under Zia. Benazir could nto make any significant move to strengthen her position because of her weak hold on power and lack of a substantial majority in the parliament.

Nawaz Sharif's stronghold in the parliament has made it possible for him to embark upon significant economic ventures such as large-scale privatisation of several industries. Despite a four-month power struggle with President Khan, resignation of a few Cabinet Ministers and Benazir Bhutto's opposition, Nawaz Sharif still enjoys substantial support within the parliament and among the common people.

Sharif's removal from office followed his attempt to challenge the 1985 constitutional amendment according to which the President has the authority to dismiss the Prime Minister and dissolve the parliament. His return to office is a landmark in the country's political history as it is the first time when a civilian government has been restored to power by a judicial order overturning the President's decision. A constitutional check on the President's exercise of power has been effectively implemented. In the coming years this can act as a preventive measure on the dismissal of the ruling government by the country's President. Indirectly, this also paves the path for the 1985 amendment challenged by Sharif to be deleted from the Constitution, or to become less forceful.

Apart from the internal power struggle, the economic and diplomatic stresses Pakistan is undergoing cannot be ignored. This includes the USA's concern about Pakistan's nuclear drive, and its relations with India. Presently, Sharif seems to be giving greater attention to solidifying his domestic base. He may also schedule elections to justify his power hold in the nation. His or the next Prime Minister's electoral victory with the same or greater parliamentarian majority accompanied by the new turn in the President-Prime Minister relations would suggest not only the survival of democracy, but its definite progress. That may also give the Premier greater footage to look beyond the frontiers. During Benazir Bhutto's time, the army had kept its hold on the significant border issues. That Sharif may be able to effect a more constructive approach in this area is suggested by the army, at least ostensibly, remaining out of the recent power struggle in government. ■

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Rocket Deal : Cautious Optimism

SUMIT CHAKRAVARTTY

The successful visit of Prof U.R. Rao, Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), to the Russian capital for talks on the fate of the Indo-Russian contract on Moscow's supply of two cryogenic rocket engines alongwith related technology to New Delhi for the purpose of India's space programme is a clear pointer to the fact that notwithstanding Washington's arms-twisting tactics Moscow would not renege on the agreement. Prof Rao categorically stated so before Indian journalists in Moscow at the end of his discussions with his Russian counterparts. This was all the more significant since such a public statement could not have come from the ISRO Chairman (who has been dealing with the Russians for almost 20 years) if there was even the remotest indication of authoritative Russian sources in touch with him having second thoughts on the deal.

The whole problem relating to the supply of cryogenic rocket engines emanate from the US perception that such engines fall within the ambit of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and their supply, would violate the MTCR guidelines as they could be used for development of the missiles Washington is keen to prevent in terms of its commitment to the non-proliferation of these weapons. Russia has a different perception on the issue—as was frankly pointed out during President Yeltsin's visit to India early this year. Kremlin wants South Block to sign the MTCR (to which the latter is opposed on the same ground of discrimination that prevents New Delhi from concluding the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) but it is also convinced of the peaceful nature of India's space programme, a point on which it finds itself opposed to the dominant thinking in the White House. The raging controversy has caused much uncertainty in India with substantial sections of public opinion unconvinced by repeated assertions of the Indian authorities that Russia would eventually not go back on the contract, as was affirmed by Prof Rao as well.

Speculation in this score has been further reinforced by the observation of the Russian Deputy Prime Minister, Alexander Shokhin, that a compromise with the US should be worked out on the Indo-Russian deal. That Shokhin chose to make this view public barely 48 hours after Prof Rao's announcement is particularly noteworthy. This is fresh testimony of the contradictory forces at work in today's Russia which is passing through a painstaking period of transition. Shokhin's observation is basically on line with the approach of the pro-US Russian Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev. However, what needs to be realised is that Shokhin is not speaking of scrapping the deal unlike Kozyrev's initial statement. Which means the US Administration has also been forced to backtrack and agree to certain concessions on the issue.

Nevertheless, it must be stressed that whatever the motivation behind Shokhin's statement, Prof U.R. Rao's announcement that Russia, in accordance with what had been decided in the contract in 1990, would deliver the first of the two cryogenic rocket engines by mid-1995 and the second by the end of the same year must be given due weightage and credence, especially when Russia has till now not gone back on its word in any of its dealings with a country like India. Even if Russia's *volte face* in the global arena in recent times cannot be ignored, and one should be prepared for any eventuality, one should not jump to any definitive conclusioin about Moscow's possible betrayal as the prophets of doom have been striving their utmost to convey on this issue. Rather, there is every reason to exude a degree of cautious and guarded optimism on the rocket deal in the light of the success of Prof Rao's mission precisely because, in the ultimate analysis, political compulsions of Russia in the international sphere just cannot override the views of Russian scientists and technocrats at present. ■

Remembering Mayakovsky

July 19, 1993 marks the birth centenary of Vladimir Mayaakovsky, that outstanding Russian poet whose revolutionary poetry of the twenties has survived the gale of anti-communism in present-day Russia. While remembering him and offering homage to his abiding memory of his birth centenary we recall the words of Sajjad Zaheer, the distinguished Indian freedom fighter and literary figure who played a pioneering role in building the progressive writers' movement in this country:

"...Mayakovsky's revolutionary fervour, his powerful broken rhythm, his new down-to-earth metallic expressions striking metaphors and his speech form moved us and fired the imagination. Even in translation Mayakovsky's lines in one of his most famous poems, *The Death of Lenin,*

We come
to bury
the earthiest man
of all
who on man's earth
have come
to live and die...

sound as simple and effective as truth itself."

(*Mainstream*, November 4, 1967)

NIKHIL : Uphold JPC's Credibility

(Continued from page 2)

It is reported that some of the Congress members of the JPC are getting impatient with the Committee's proceedings. It is understandable that they should be fighting shy of the Committee undertaking a thorough probe into Harshad Mehta's allegations against the Prime Minister. By normal standards, they should be the one who should have demanded a thorough probe into Harshad Mehta's allegations so that he could be shown up as an unscrupulous liar, falsely implicating the Prime Minister on the charge of having taken a handsome bribe. But the visible annoyance on the part of some of the Congress members of the JPC at any such thorough probe actually amounts to doing a disservice to the Prime Minister, because any half-heartedness in dealing with Harshad Mehta would actually boomerang for the ruling Congress party as it would generate the misgivings that there may perhaps be something for the Prime Minister's side to hide.

The JPC today is placed by a strange set of circumstances in a position from where it can make or mar the entire parliamentary system in the eyes of the public. It is important to realise that the public is by no means gullible in today's world, and its capacity for discernment can be underplayed only at the cost of those short-sighted enough to try to mislead it. It would be the height of folly on the part of the Congress party to smear the JPC or block or filibuster its proceedings. They should realise that by setting up the JPC, the Narasimha Rao Government has contributed considerably towards its own credibility as well.

It is understandable that the Congress party is put in a serious predicament. Minister after Minister are put on the mat, and the prestige of the government has touched an all-time low. What the JPC has achieved so far is to retain the confidence of the public by working steadfastly under the wise guidance of its Chairman. Ram Niwas Mirdha has shown that he is serious and utterly committed to enhance the confidence of the people in the affairs of Parliament. He is certainly a personality of a totally different species from Shankaranand under whose chairmanship the JPC on the Bofors case was reduced to a shame. Perhaps the Congress members who have started maligning the JPC of conducting itself as a Star Chamber expected it to function as the cosy bedchamber that the JPC on Bofors probe turned out to be for the Congress bosses under Shankaranand's guidance.

Times have changed, but some people are congenitally incapable of realising that. It is only by upholding the credibility of the JPC can the faith of the public in the parliamentary system still be saved. There must be no undermining of the JPC from within the Committee itself. ■

(July 12)

ANITA: Dissecting Official Version

(Continued from page 6)

South Block when I interviewed V.P. Singh. It is very thorough and time-consuming. The Pakistanis are VIPs but they have to be subjected to the security checks. Clearing all 16 of them would take 15 minutes at the very least. If as we have established, the Pakistanis arrived at 10.45, there is no way they would have been in a position to meet the PM before 11.00 AM. Members of the delegation have confirmed that they had to wait for some time before being ushered in. Considering the CCPA got over at 10.30 (here too we have two different versions—the first, from some CCPA members, said it was over at 10.30, and later the government spokesman said it ended at 10.45). There is thus a crucial gap of half an hour to 45 minutes.

That the visitors' log books are unreliable and suspicious is also evident from the entry of Jagmohan, the former Kashmir Governor. Jagmohan pointed out that it was not his handwriting or signature, which appears in another log book. He also said he always signs in as "MP Rajya Sabha" and not "former Governor". The spokesman's explanation is that because Jagmohan too is a dignitary, an advance pass was made for him as well. So it was some official's signature, not Jagmohan's.

But when Jagmohan denied that he met the Prime Minister on November 4, the government spokesman changed track and said that Jagmohan may have cancelled the appointment at the last minute. We are expected to believe that an ordinary MP will cancel an appointment with the Prime Minister of India at the last minute. Nothing but an illness or calamity could have prevented Jagmohan from meeting the Prime Minister, in which case he would have called in to cancel. In which case, the question of making an advance pass does not arise. The advance pass would have been made at best half an hour before the appointment. If Jagmohan was unwell, he would surely have called in at least before 11.30 to cancel a 12 o'clock appointment. But Jagmohan's counter is simple and pointblank: he wonders how an appointment could be cancelled, when he had not sought one in the first place!

Interestingly, the chronology is again disturbed in Jagmohan's entry. He is serial number one in another visitors' log book, shown as having clocked in at 12 o'clock. Serial numbers 2 to 6 are shown as having clocked in at 11.30 to 11.45. Serial numbers 7, 8 and 9 are shown as having entered at 12 o'clock—and guess who they are: Mani Shankar Aiyar, Jitendra Prasad and V.N. Gadgil. Thereafter, the chronology is once again maintained flawless till past 6.00 PM. The advance pass is used again to explain the discrepancy. In which case, why weren't advance passes made for Aiyar, a Lok Sabha MP, and Prasad and Gadgil who, as we all know, are Narsimha Rao's right-hand men?

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PATENTLY, the visitor's log is a very suspicious document. When grilled on all these discrepancies, the spokesman's argument was—if the document had been fabricated, there wouldn't be all these silly mistakes. It would have been foolproof.

No way. Only truth is foolproof. It is only tampered documents that leave tell-tale signs through a trail of very silly errors. Look at the draft of the JPC document. This voluminous 468-page document is something I have studied in detail. The JPC draft passed severe strictures on B. Shankaranand because of the irregular investments of Oil India Development Board in Canfina and Syndicate Bank, during the time he was the Chairman. Pages 265 to 267 of the JPC document detail the irregularities in processing offers for the Portfolio Management Schemes by OIDB. A cover-up is usually riddled with foolish little mistakes. For example, the JPC report exposes how a letter from Canfina dated March 26, 1992 is shown in OIDB's records as having been received on March 25!

One does not even have to go as far the JPC. Prime Minister Narasimha Rao is known for his financial honesty. He has not been involved in a single corruption scandal. The one and only controversy that he has been implicated in, however, is the St. Kitts forgery case. The CBI investigation clearly exposed his role in this scandal. To refresh the memory of readers, in 1989, as the then External Affairs Minister, Narasimha Rao had asked India's Permanent Secretary to the United Nations to certify that the documents sought to prove that Ajeya Singh, son of V.P. Singh, has $20 million stashed away in St. Kitts. Later, these documents were proved to be laughable forgeries. The CBI report shows that some 10 phone calls were made from Narasimha Rao's room in the New York hotel to Adnan Khashoggi who, as we all know, has good connections with godman Chandraswami who, as we all know, has good connections with Narasimha Rao. After he became the Prime Minister, Narasimha Rao admitted his role in the St. Kitts scandal in an interview with *Indian Express*, in which he said he had to do what he did because instructions came from a "person whom he could not say no to". That presumably was Rajiv Gandhi who was out to destroy V.P. Singh who was posing a major electoral challenge for the November 1989 general elections. The St. kitts forgeries were riddled with outrageous mistakes. Just one sample: Ajeya Singh's signature was in Hindi! He works for a prestigious bank in New York and he signs in Hindi!

As the two examples I have listed above show, discrepancies only arise when there are forgeries and cover-ups. Truth never has discrepancies simply because there is only one truth. There can be no version of truth.

When all this was pointed out, the government spokesman was well and truly stumped. His only defence, at this point, was: "The time factor is not important. The fact is that the PM was in his Office and not home at 10.45." The spokesman claimed, the police records, which he has given to the press, prove in no uncertain terms, that the PM was in his office till 1.15. As a matter of fact, they don't.

III

THREE police records have been made available to the press on the basis of which we are expected to come to the conclusion that the PM reached Office at 10.00 AM and did not move out of his Office till 1.15. All three documents finally add up to nothing.

Let's take the first document. It is called the Proforma of SOD. That stands for Signal Officer's Diary. This gives the PM's movements one day in advance. This shows on November 3, the PM's itinerary given to the SOD was that on November 4 the PM had to reach Rashtrapati Bhavan at 9.15 AM. He was to reach South Block at 10.00 AM. Then there is a long gap. The next entry is that he is at 7 Race Course Road at 4.00 PM. What good is this document that leaves a huge gap? *The SOD document does not even record that the PM would leave his office for home at 1.15, let alone a quick dash, as some suspect, at about 10.45.*

When this is pointed out, the spokesman asks me to refer to the Delhi police's "wireless log and diary" that registers the movement of all VVIPs. This is the most crucial document in the sheaf. It records the movement of all VVIPs, not just Narasimha Rao. *But only a truncated portion of this crucial document has been given to the press.* The portion of the wireless log that we have been given, records Narasimha Rao's movements only till 10.00 AM when he is logged in as having reached his South Block Office. The remaining pages are not given to us. What good is this document to me? After all, what is critical is what Narasimha Rao did after 10.00 AM, not before 10.00 AM not before. I need the continuation sheets.

When I point this out, the much-harried spokesman shows me with what he clearly sees as the trump-card in his sheaf of documents. This is the fourth and last document. It is called the movements of the PM on November 4 "based on the logs of different wireless nets operating in Delhi police control rooms/Establishments".

This document purportedly gives minute-to-minute details of the PM's movements from 9.10 AM to 8.30 PM. It purportedly tracks PM's movements as recorded by 15 police wireless nets in the vicinity.

This shows that the PM reached South Block at 9.55 AM and came out only at 1.10. But these two pages are calculated to impress and thereby pull wool over one's eyes. The time is broken down very impressively to hours, minutes and even seconds. We learn interesting police codewords. For instance, "Rashtrapti Bhavan" is referred to as "Mahal", 7 Race Coruse Road, the PM's residence, is called "Manzil" and South Block is referred to as "Ashram". (No wonder the PM said he would become a sanyasi if Mehta's allegations are proved!) There is a "status" column which purports to show the exact minute the PM is ready to leave, when he actuallly leaves, when he is mobile and when he has reached his destination. In its latest issue, *India Today*, cited this as the "clinching evidence" that proved that Narasimha Rao was in his office from 10.00 AM to 1.15 PM.

In reality, this document is worthless. I would not even dignify the two pages as a "document". *What is projected as the ace in the pack of documents are just two full-scap unmarked pages. They are ordinary type-writing sheets, with no stamp or marks of official stationary.* What is presented is a compilation done by somebody else. I am supposed to believe what the PIO or whoever has compiled on a plain, unmarked sheet of paper. All those codewords, minute-to-minute recording and names of police stations cannot impress me—because it is a compilation on two plain sheets of papers. Anyone can do that.

I point this out to the spokesman. He admits that this is only a compilation. How can I believe something that is compiled by someone on a plain sheet of paper? This cannot be called evidence. At the bottom of this two-pager is a sentence that reads: "Photocopies of the relevant portion of the log books" of the 15 police wireless nets that monitor the PM's movements have been "attached". This, as it turns out, is a lie! The relevant portion is not enclosed in the press kit. I ask for these photostat copies, but the spokesman tells me that what he is referring to is the police wireless log and diary. But that, as I have already pointed out, records movements only till 10.00 AM! The crucial section is after 10.00 AM. But where is the corroborating evidence for the "relevant portion"? Wasn't there a deliberate attempt to give the impression that everything had been given, when in fact the crucial section had been withheld?

◆

THE most crucial document in the press kit is the police wireless log and diary. But that details the PM's movements until 10.00 AM. The continuation sheets of this document can provide the clinching evidence. The much-harried spokesman tries his last defence—how can the PM's movements be recorded in this document when he in fact has not stepped out of the Office? Unfortunately, many journalists fell for that very subtle and devious argument.

But, as pointed out earlier, what makes the police wirless log and diary the most crucial, document in the pack is that it records all VVIP movements, not just Narasimha Rao's (whose call sign is Y-4). So if the continuation sheets show that between 10.00 AM and 1.15 PM, no movements of the PM are recorded, then he was definitely in the Office. This document cannot have long empty gaps because it records all VVIP movements. The PM may not have moved but other VVIPs would have been moving about. So in this VVIP traffic, if the PM's movement is not recorded, then it means he has a watertight alibi. It's so simple. There is no need for Narsimha Rao to go through an *agnipareeksha. If the government wanted to clear the PM's name, all they had to do was to release the continuation sheets of the police wireless log and diary.*

This makes me completely suspicious. *Why is the most crucial document that can prove Narasimha Rao's innocence truncated?* All his defences have crumbled and the spokesman is well and truly angry. He tries the oldest trick in the book. Out goes bonhomie, in comes aggression. He snaps: "I cannot give you everything that you ask for." I still persist. Why did he give this document to us in the first place if he will not give the crucial portion? "That was only a sample," the spokesman says. A sample? Then why didn't he give me a sample of VVIP movements from 9.00 AM to 11.30 AM that is of crucial relevance to the issue? *He has no answer!*

Thus, the bunch of documents given to the press by the government as proof that the PM was in his Office right until 1.15 just does not hold. Its a sheaf calculated to throw the press off from the tracks. The crucial document has been truncated. Why? The answer to that question can make or break Narasimha Rao's 55-year political career.

The documents were released to the press on June 28 and they sought to prove that the PM did not meet Mehta on November 4. Harshad Mehta has repeatedly said that he met the PM only once and that was on November 4. When the government maintains that the PM did not meet Mehta on November 4, why doesn't Narasimha Rao categorically deny having met Mabta? The day the documents were released, Narasimha Rao repeated to an AP reporter that he does not "remember" whether he met the stockbroker.

The spokesman has no answer. Harried and infuriated, he says: "Why are you grilling me? You should be grilling Harshad Mehta. We refuse to be tried by the press. I have nothing more to say."

The interview ends. This was on June 30, 5.00 PM. Immediately after my interview, the spokesman's daily briefing began. During this press conference, he said he will not entertain any more questions on this issue and that he was henceforth treating the subject as "closed". Within 48 hours of release of these documents, he refused to answer any more questions on the documents.

Richard Nixon, former President of the United States, taped the headquarters of the Democrats. It was not the act of taping that got him. It was the subsequent cover-up and its systematic exposure by the press that led to his fall. ■

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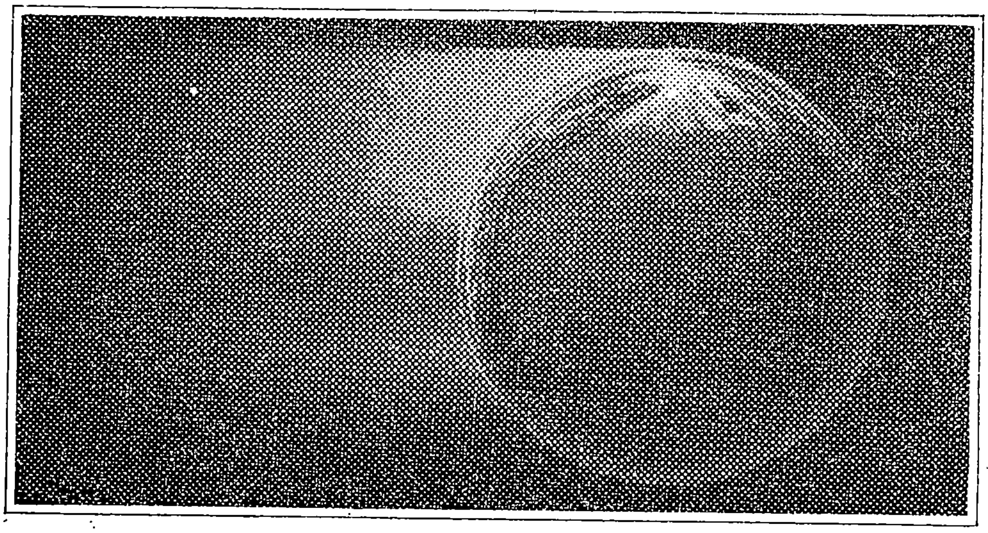

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Girilal Jain • Congress Role in Ramaswami Case

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EDITORIAL

The Yeltsin Betrayal

It is by now obvious that the Yeltsin dispensation in Russia, and the country's Foreign Ministry headed by the pro-US Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev in particular, has sought to deal a heavy blow to the development of India's space programme by reneging the contract on the sale of cryogenic engines and related technology. This is the first time that the Russian Government has acted as an unreliable friend in its dealings with India for it has gone back on a solemn assurance Moscow gave to New Delhi on the subject—a promise repeated with all authority by no less a person than Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin, the Russian President, during his visit to India early this year.

The Yeltsin betrayal has come as a result of US blackmail, the term having been appropriately employed by the former BJP President, Dr Murli Manohar Joshi. This *volte face* has exposed the real face of the present Russian Government as a subservient stooge of the White House in Washington. It is a disgraceful spectacle to find Yeltsin and his entourage of free-marketeers simply prostrating before the US leadership, something unimaginable even a few years ago. No wonder that the justified indignation in New Delhi against such a humiliating surrender by Russia, the successor to a former superpower, before the present-day sole superpower is shared by large segments of public opinion in Moscow representing perhaps the majority of Russia's informed populace (far more alive to the global political realities then their counterparts in the US).

The US contention has all along been that the sale of critical technology associated with cryogenic rocket engines—as stipulated in the contract—violates the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). But what do the MTCR guidelines specify? The guidelines, as has been brought into focus by strategic experts in this country, are intended to "control the transfer of equipment and technology that could contribute to nuclear-capable missile". It is also pointed out that the "purpose of these guidelines is to limit the risk of nuclear proliferation by controlling transfers that could make a contribution to nuclear weapons delivery systems other than manned aircraft". It is further underscored that the guidelines "are not designed to impede national space programmes... as long as such programmes could not contribute to nuclear weapons delivery systems".

This precisely is the point. The entire aim of the Indo-Russian contract is to enable India to launch its satellite (Geo-Stationary Launch Vehicle or GSLV) into the geo-stationary orbit—so necessary for our socio-economic development—by use of the cryogenic system. In other words, its objective is for purposes far removed from defence or military operations connected with nuclear weaponry. In fact when Gennady Burbulis, the former Secretary of Russia's State Council, came to India in 1992 he made a public declaration to the effect that Russia was prepared to allow a team of international experts to verify if the arrangement of the sale of cryogenic engines and related technology would lead to India misusing the contract for bolstering up its defence or military functions in the direction of nuclear proliferation. However, the US was not interested in such an exercise and dismissed the suggestion offhand. Instead it went on to unilaterally (mis-) interpret the MTCR guidelines resorting to gross misrepresentation of the Indo-Russian deal while continually twisting the arms of the Russian Government. And all this at a time when the US authorities' hypocrisy on the issue is so patent that it does not merit any close scrutiny. It has lately cast a blind eye to Chinese missile sales following China's bland promise to abide by the MTCR. But more noteworthy is Washington's persisting supply of missile technology to Tel Aviv even after signing the MTCR agreement.

The US was, of course, emboldened to resort to pressure tactics against Russia because of the capitulationist policy of the Kozyrev-led Russian Foreign Ministry. The result was Yeltsin's ignominious retreat. This has once more demonstrated the US dominance over the Yeltsin regime. In the process Russia's self-respect lies tattered.

What Yeltsin and his cronies forget is that the Russian public opinion is not going to take this retreat lying down. Already the Russian Parliament has decided to censure the Yeltsin Government on the issue. The public outcry in Moscow against the sell-out to Washington is quite strong and the Russian President can ignore it only at his peril. He may be feeling dizzy with success following the April referendum but what he cannot forget is that whereas he and his economic policies won a vote of confidence from the people such a vote went in favour of the Russian Parliament as well.

Of utmost significance is the fact that the sharply negative reaction in Moscow to the Yeltsin betrayal is reflected best in the denunciatory tone adopted by the spokesman of the contracting party from the Russian side, Glavkosmos (the Indian contracting party being the Indian Space Research Organisation or ISRO) which has already raised its banner of revolt in the prevailing atmosphere of *glasnost* in Russia. Glavkosmos' close cooperation with ISRO is well known. However, it is necessary to reveal certain vital facts here.

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EVER since the US Administration arbitrarily imposed, in May last year, sanctions on both ISRO and Glavkosmos for having contracted the $ 350 million deal, Glavkosmos reacted to this step by enhancing its cooperation with ISRO and the pace of transfer of technology connected with the cryogenic system was substantially accelerated. As a result two subscale cryogenic engines have already been successfully tested at the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre in Thiruvananthapuram where the design of the prototype of the full engine (designated as C-12) has already been completed. The technology made available for such an exercise is known as the regeneratively cooled technology.

Alongside technology vital equipment have been delivered by Glavkosmos six months ahead of schedule. Among such equipment are the storage-cum-transportation tank for the integrated hydrogen plant (based on the most difficult technology in the entire cryogenic engine assembly since liquid hydrogen requires cooling at -253°C.) and several special materials capable of withstanding exceedingly high temperatures (over 4000°C.) generated during the operation of the cryogenic system. The undeniable truth is that the Russian experts from Glavkosmos have helped to set up the basic R & D facility at Mahendragiri and worked out the thrust parameters for the Indian cryogenic rocket. These experts visited Mahendragiri and Thiruvananthapuram four times since May 1992 (initially they were supposed to visit only once).

All this is indicative of the seriousness with which the Galvkosmos personnel were cooperating with ISRO regardless of the US sanctions. Herein lies the source of the ISRO chief, Prof U.R. Rao's confidence and optimism regarding the implementation of the contract. During his recent visit to Moscow he did not find anything that could even remotely suggest that his counterparts in Glavkosmos were trying to back out of the contract. On the contrary, they exuded confidence giving the time schedule of the supply of cryogenic rocket engines from Russia. Hence the upbeat mood at his press conference in Moscow.

It is, therefore, more than transparent that the Yeltsin surrender to the Clinton Administration is a betrayal of not only India's trust but the national interests of Russia itself since the space industry of that country occupies a prominent place in that category. As Nikolai Semyonov, the Glavkosmos spokesman, has underlined, upto 60,000 Russian workers could lose their jobs as a result of this betrayal. He was deeply sceptical of the materialisation of the US promise of lucrative space contracts to Russia for having annulled the deal with India. Washington, in his considered opinion, was "just out to kill our space industry".

The chief of the Russian Space Agency, Yuri N. Koptev, has, meanwhile, tried to engage in a damage limitation endeavour countering the US view that the deal was "frozen". Yet he too could not conceal the fact of Russian capitulation before US arms-twisting.

Nevertheless, it is premature to conclude that the days of *Hindi-Russi bhai bhai* are over. As is clear from the above, it is the Russian public opinion—wherein the non- or anti-Stalinist democratic intelligentsia rooted in Russian history and national interests form a vibrant and vocal section—that will have the final say in any such issue. India just cannot be wished away from the collective Russian consciousness regardless of the Kozyrev-Gaidar offensive (resembling the assaults of the World Bank-IMF lobby in the Finance Ministry in North Block on our self-reliant advance).

The Yeltsin betrayal has resulted in considerable erosion of Moscow's stature and prestige in India. However, Yeltsin does not represent the whole of Russia. It is the Russian people who enjoy that privilege. And as far as they are concerned, they do not share the views of Andrei Kozyrev and Yegor Gaidar (the two most articulate exponents of the Yeltsin course in the global arena), just as the Clinton Administration's unilateralism in onesidedly interpreting the MTCR guidelines is opposed by large sections of the US intelligentsia notable among whom are the American scientists.

Try as much as they would, the Pentagon bosses thus cannot have the last laugh. Their anti-Indian activities—on the sale of cryogenic engines as well as on Kashmir vis-a-vis Pakistan—can only reinforce the Indian resolve to develop and strengthen its indigenous capabilities. As Air Commodore Jasjit Singh, Director of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, has emphasised after reviewing the events connected with the sale of cryogenic engine technology, "the most important lesson of the sordid developments is the importance of self-reliance".

Despite desperate attempts by the Fund-Bank lobby in the Finance Ministry to undermine self-reliance, what the Yeltsin betrayal due to Clinton's blackmail has underlined is the urgency to revert back to our original strategy of promoting a self-reliant economy in conformity with our political identity as a non-aligned nation. There is no other alternative before us today.

July 21 *S.C.*

TRIBUTE

A Complete Editor

N.C.

It is not easy to write about a friend who belonged to one's own profession and could always excite interest and provoke sharp reactions as part of a never-ending but enormously rewarding exercise.

I first met Girilal Jain about thirty years ago in the scintillating ambience of Shamlal's home. What struck me at that very first encounter and every time later was his razor-sharp mind, constantly engaged in intellectual explorations but never enchained to any dogma. With him, differences of viewpoints never came in the way of mutual respect. Many have attacked him for his views which might have been unfashionable at times, but Giri never misunderstood so long as he was convinced that the differences arose out of honest divergence in perception. In an environment in which references to history are nowadays at a discount, he stood out as a refreshing contrast: always stimulating, never blase nor cliche-ridden.

As a journalist, he was scrupulously thorough. Himself having excelled both as a correspondent and at the editorial desk, Giri was never tired of helping youngsters in the profession by constant guidance and discussing with them as equals the roots of a development or the implications of an unfolding story. He insisted on a relationship of equality as a professional colleague, never the superior air of holding an important post. With his acute observation, he never indulged in saucy gossip.

Personally I always benefited from meeting him and talking to him sometimes on the phone from Bombay. When he on his own asked me to write a regular column in the paper of which he was the Chief Editor for more than ten years, I was touched, but more so, when I found that while he would let me have my say without reserve, he would always make it a point to pursue the subject with me afterwards. On his suggestion, I could go in for reportage assignments—whether it was Iran or China, Russia or Pakistan. His was a landmark innings as a complete editor.

As one who always looked upon the acquisition of knowledge as an instrument for delineating social forces, Girilal Jain will long be remembered by his peers as having demonstrated that a communicator is not just a chronicler but a moulder of opinions that go towards the making of history. ■

A Thoughtful Friend

M.V. DESAI

One reads poetry and fiction without wanting to meet the author in person. Yet to get acquainted with a journalist before meeting him and working with him may not be the best way to knowing him. This is how Girilal Jain came to become in my mind's eye more than a byline in *thought* and elsewhere. Fancifully, I saw him also as a friend of Arthur Moore, M.N. Roy, Philip Spratt and Ram Singh. Little did I anticipate that we would be cast to work together on the same newspaper.

Producing a daily newspaper calls for team work. Much beyond the ability to express and to argue. It was my luck to be blessed with the best of teams. So we became the almost daily envy of *The Times of India*'s two other onetime stable-mates, Shrikrishna Moolgaokar and Dinkarrao Mankekar, then editors of the rival *The Hindustan Times* and *Indian Express* respectively. Credit must go to Girilal Jain who convinced Delhi-ites that a paper with Bombay as provenance could also report Delhi events engagingly and intuitively. Delhi's newspapers have yet to regain this healthy rivalry.

Girilal went to Karachi and London and I to the public media establishments like the radio. Once again I had to be content with reading him. There too, as usual, he worked hard, read widely and made his mark. More, he grew with the assignments and graduated to find his level in the thinking and writing echelons not just of newspaper producers but of intellectuals with a flair for politics and foreign affairs. He earned a standing and a reputation of his own. But he never diminished the stature nor undercut the functions of his editor distantly ensconced in Bombay and seen only infrequently in Delhi both as Adib and shy Shamlal.

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EARLY in 1980 Mrs Gandhi decided that the Press Commission headed by Justice P.K. Goswami should be retired to make room for another under Justice K.K. Mathew. The emphasis of inquiry was to shift to a responsible press, respectful of the privacy of public figures. She wanted names of persons fit to be members of the new Commission. This is how Girilal came to lead the group of Rajendra Mathur, Justice S.K. Mukarji and H.K. Paranjape.

Thereby hangs a true story. Girilal left in the evening for Bombay—still the headquarters of *The Times of India* and the turf of the reigning editor. I rang him up the following morning and asked for a favour. He asked me if we were still not friends. So I said he should agree and join the Press Commission alongwith the three others.

"How could I, Mahendra? Only yesterday I said 'no' to Vasant Sathe and Mrs Gandhi's invitation," was his response.

"Leave that for me to sort out," I told him like a go-getting *babu.*

As journalists, we both had the habit of taking quick and reasonable decisions. Over the years we had not been faulted for being hasty and arbitrary. So I told Girilal that I had learned something new from Justice Goswami—to leave space for an occasional second thought. Girilal not only joined the Press Commission to become a valued member but also wrote the now famous Minute of Dissent on editorial freedoms and independence of newspapers. This Minute will be read as long as the history of the Indian press is written.

Until that morning, I used to ask myself off and on if E.M. Forster was right in suggesting he would put friendship before attachment to the country and the state. After Girilal's good turn to me, perhaps Forster can be better understood. Now that he is no more, I wonder if I was as good a friend to Girilal as he to me. ■

The author was the Resident Editor of The Times of India *in New Delhi in 1958-60.*

Corrigendum

In Hari Sharan Chhabra's article "Nelson Mandela Is 75" published in *Mainstream* (July 17, 1993), the last sentence on page 27, fourth paragraph, column 2 should read as follows:

> He is never tired of telling foreign investors that the ANC had "issued an investment code which provides that there will be no expropriation of the property of investors".

This error is regretted. —*Editor*

Implications of Left and Left-of-Centre Consolidation

RAJNI KOTHARI

We are witness to a sudden change in the climate of politics. The process of governance has lost its stability and is becoming increasingly volatile and jumpy. There is an air of desperation in major political camps. Narasimha Rao's repeated assertion that his government will complete its full term indicates the sense of desperation. So does his sudden indulgence in BJP-bashing so out of tune with his character, his equally desperate appeal to "secular parties" to join hands with him, again so out of tune with his own and his party's established ways, also an appeal that makes little sense after December 6.

The evident fear of facing the people and more recently the fear of facing Parliament are signs of a party that wants to somehow stick on to power but at the same time feels besieged from all sides. hence its dependence on external finance as a means of gaining some legitimacy in a situation of fast declining credibility at home; which is why it was so eager to spare Dr Manmohan Singh of any criticism.

In some ways the Congress has been on a decline ever since the Emergency. The anti-Janta vote of 1980 as well as the post-assassination election of 1984 took place under special circumstances that did not reduce the long-term decline in the Congress party's standing with the people. But never was the rupture between the party and the people so complete as it is today. While at a deeper level of understanding, the Emergency in 1975, the storming of the Golden Temple in 1984 and the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992 represent a betrayal of the basic consensus of a secular democratic polity and have together brought the party to its nemesis, December 6 and its aftermath under Narasimha Rao provide the final seal of its end as a party of national consensus. 1992-93 is not 1984 and it is no longer possible for the Congress to take advantage of people's feelings of insecurity and anxiety. It seems that the Congress has missed the boat even in terms of exploitation of communal feelings.

The sense of desperation is also found in the BJP. The Advani phenomenon has to be understood for what it really is, not for what it is being made out to represent. Despite Advani's intentionof taking the party out of the Ayodhya syndrome, he has to keep alive the religious card both from the point of view of carrying his various constituents with him and because there is little else by way of an ideological apeal that his party has to offer. Following Ayodhya, his party has ceased to be a disciplined cadre-based organisation.

There are now the *sadhus*, the lumpens and the traditional secular-communalists from the Jana Sangh days. It is these elements and the awful excesses of Ayodhya and the post-Ayodhya violence that has for the first time made so many people fearful of the BJP and of the prospect of its ever coming to power. Never before in India's political history has there been so much fear induced by an Opposition party especially among intellectuals and large sections of the media.

The results of the by-elections have not been reassuring for the party. Its middle class base has been shaken following the ghastly events in Bombay, Surat, Ahmedabad and elsewhere. Hence the futile search for broadening the party's social base.

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THERE has been growing interest in the role of non-Congress, non-BJP secular parties in such a scenario. The question is whether in the confrontation between the Congress and the BJP they will be allowed enough scope, or will it be that their hostility towards the Congress will help the BJP. On the other hand the BJP is fast ceasing to play the role of a proper Opposition party. It is too much on the offensive to be truly effective. Its attempt to hijack the V.P. Singh campaign corruption while at the same time making no secret of its anti-Mandal stance has dealt a body-blow to the tradition of an anti-Congress Opposition alignment.

This may not be bad in the long run. The problem with both the 1977 and 1989 alignments

(Continued on page 34)

The author, a well-known political scientist, is one of the country's foremost intellectuals whose thought-provoking ideas and championing of causes related to civil liberties and human rights have left a distinct impress on Indian polity.

Assessing Fast-Changing Developments

S.K. SINGH

The Pakistan Army Chief, General Abdul Waheed Kakar, has forced both the feuding political chieftains, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, to quit, after announcing that a fresh general election will take place in October. They were not happy to depart. Each has suggested how much he loves democracy and how both Pakistan and the ideas of democracy may be hurt due to his departure. During the election campaign the country will be told about their motivations and tricks and the negotiations preceding this final step. Before taking this step General Kakar gave the two leaders every opportunity to sort the matter out quietly and gracefully. Their mutual suspicions and hostility were too much to permit this. It was surprising that the General allowed them to quibble on for so many days. Each insisted that the other should go first. Both went kicking and screaming. Ishaq Khan until the end was being difficult and technical. And Nawaz Sharif was his aggressive and difficult self even in his broadcast to the nation.

General Kakar kept his promise of not taking power directly as President and Chief Martial Law Administrator. This must have made his friends in the USA and the West happy. The General also showed sensitivity to the views of the Opposition leaders, especially Benazir Bhutto. He was patient and persistent in his shuttle diplomacy with these political leaders. It is a pity that he must have seen through their weak and petty personal motivations. He must also have negotiated the names of their two successors and perhaps those of the Provincial caretaker Governors and Chief Ministers as well.

It must have been easy to agree on the name of the Acting President, Wasim Sajjad, as he is the Chairman of the Senate and thus next in line of succession. His personality is non-controversial. The new Acting Prime Minister, Moeen Qureishi's name is a surprise. He is an economist, until now entirely apolitical, and someone who has lived abroad in Washington DC for many years. He is well known to the Americans. And this may have been a factor in his favour.

The author, a well-known diplomat who was the Foreign Secretary some years ago, served as India's Ambassador to Pakistan, Afghanistan and Lebanon.

The nature of the crisis in Pakistan generated much uncertainty. There had to be several postponements of all types. The COAS, General Kakar, himself had to postpone two important foreign visits, to the USA and to Somalia. Nawaz Sharif had to postpone his radio and television address to the nation several times during the last ten days, and again on his very last day in office. Benazir Bhutto postponed several times her Long March to Islamabad, until she was finally persuaded by General Kakar to abandon it altogether.

Benazir wanted to be accepted as the fourth centre of power in Pakistan, and used this opportunity to achieve this. She threatened populist action and made it clear to the country at large, Ishaq Khan, Nawaz Sharif, General Kakar, and even her collaborators in the All Party Conference that she had the street-power behind her and that she would not hesitate mobilising it. Obviously, in certain sections in Washington DC too she had influence and credibility. Some in Pakistan wonder, however, as to the extent of influence she really has with the Clinton wing of the Democratic Party. Also how really popular, in terms of translating popularity into votes, the PPP is in Punjab today.

The COAS faced a dilemma. He wanted to keep the new US Administration happy by showing respect for democracy. The upholders of democracy in the West would have been uncomfortable with a new Chief Martial Law Administration in Islamabad just now. At the same time General Kakar had to impress upon the people of Pakistan that he was the boss, and determined to remain that.

General Kakar has within the last fortnight built himself up with the country, also with the Army he commands. He is now seen as *primus inter pares* within their Troika. The Pakistan Army wants, at the present, to be seen by the world at large as law-abiding and pro-democracy. This they have achieved. But there should be no mistake, it will be General Kakar, as Benazir has been saying, and not Moeen Qureishi who can organise fair elections in Pakistan. Kakar tomorrow may be a stronger influence in Pakistan than Kakar today.

(Continued on page 35)

Ramaswami Impeachment Case

Sordid Tale of Congress Politics

S. VISWAM

The following is a fascinating inside story of the impeachment move against Justice Ramaswami and its outcome detailing the manner in which the Congress party in particular conducted itself in the whole affair. Written by a senior journalist who currently head of the Delhi Bureau of The Deccan Chronicle, *this is a chapter from* Gone At Last: Story of V. Ramaswami's Impeachment *(edited by S. Sahay and published by Har-Anand Publications, New Delhi). This is being carried in two instalments.* —Editor

On May 13, 1993, two days after the impeachment motion against Justice Ramaswami had collapsed in the Lok Sabha, the Minister of State for Home, Rajesh Pilot, wrote a letter to the Prime Minister on the letterhead of the All-India Congress Committee and in his capacity as a member of the Congress Working Committee demanding a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the Bombay blasts.

Pilot's unexpected action, though unrelated on the face of it to the outcome of the tortuous May 10-11 Lok Sabha debate on the impeachment motion, was immediately interpreted by a large number of Congressmen as a move blessed by the "central leadership", an euphemism for Narasimha Rao himself, to embarrass Sharad Pawar, particularly in view of Pilot's assertion that "an inquiry by an agency like the CBI into the Bombay explosions will go a long way to establish that *the Government has no brief to shield anyone, however high he may be placed*". (emphasis added)

Pilot's was the second salvo to be fired against the Maharashtra Chief Minister in connection with the issue of the probe into the blasts being handed over to the CBI. The first had been fired a few days earlier in the form of a memorandum signed by as many as 70 MPs, not all of them from Maharashtra, presented to the Prime Minister making the same demand. This memorandum, it was said, was inspired by the Union Home Minister, S.B. Chavan, himself. Chavan, a political rival of Pawar in their home State, was said to be keen on embarrassing the Chief Minister who had been resisting the Home Ministry's moves to involve the CBI in the probe.

That Pilot should lend a helping hand in Chavan's campaign was significant in itself against the background of the strained relations between the two. But even more significant was the timing of Pilot's letter, coming as it did immediately in the wake of the Lok Sabha verdict on the impeachment motion. The move was therefore seen, rightly or wrongly, as designed to rattle Pawar whose supporters in the Congress Parliamentary Party had not only opposed the Leader's decision to abstain from the voting on the motion but had remonstrated with Narasimha Rao for giving the nation the impression that the Congress saw nothing wrong in shielding a corrupt judge. Had these MPs stopped with just conveying their displeasure to the party leader, nothing further might have happened. But, in their moment of anger, they also let it be known that they intended to raise the question of the party's decision to abstain, at the meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party scheduled to be held on May 14.

Pilot's letter was, therefore, seen as the Prime Minister's retaliatory gesture in sending a message to Pawar that he was vulnerable. In the meantime, Pawar chose to disclose that though he was still of the opinion that the Bomay Police was quite competent to conduct the investigations and bring them to successful conclusion, he had no objection *per se* in inducting the CBI if the Prime Minister so desired.

It is difficult to say whether the Prime Minister thought that Pawar had suddenly become conciliatory or whether he was satisfied that the purpose intended in blessing Pilot's action had been achieved. However, at the May 14 meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party, Narasimha Rao admitted that Pawar had informed him that he was not averse to the CBI's induction but neatly skirted round the controversy by declaring that the case may be handed over to the CBI "when necessary".

Pilot's action drew a great deal of flak within the party on the dual ground that it had been "leaked" to the press and that inner-party power struggles were being made use of to target senior leaders.

However, it is instructive that some of the Ministers like Sitaram Kesari and A.K. Antony, and some of the MPs like Jagesh Desai, Suresh Kalmadi and Sharad Dighe, who frowned upon Pilot's move, had also protested against the Prime Minister's decision to abstain from the voting on the impeachment motion.

It is equally instructive that once the Prime Minister had informed the party that a controversy was unwarranted since the Maharashtra Government and the Centre were ruled by the same party and there could be no administrative or political "difficulties" in deciding on the CBI's induction, the issue died a natural death. However, none of the members who had earlier appeared to be highly agitated over the Prime Minister's decision to abstain from voting on the impeachment motion thought it fit to raise that question in the party forum. Nor, to no one's surprise, did the Prime Minister himself deem it necessary to take the members into confidence on why he caused an oral whip to be issued at the last hour to abstain from voting on such a momentous issue as the impeachment of a Supreme Court judge on corruption charges. Indeed, it was as if a routine valedictory meeting was being held at the end of a routine session of Parliament which had transacted routine business. As far as the party was concerned, the impeachment drama might not have been enacted at all.

The entire episode brought into sharper focus the cleavage within the Congress, not only in respect of the impeachment motion but also in respect of many other issues of policy and programme. Considering that the question of whether or not the CBI should be involved in the probe into the blasts was not even remotely connected with the impeachment motion, the convulsions which Pilot's letter caused in the party was illustrative of the many divides within the Congress on the one hand and the distance between the leadership and the rank and file on the other.

Not so strangely, it is precisely the pulls and pressures of some of these divides that influenced the outcome of the impeachment motion.

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LOOKING at the drama in retrospect, it is clear that neither the Congress nor the combined Opposition really realised or comprehended the seriousness of a development as the impeachment, for the firs time in India's judicial and parliamentary history, o a Supreme Court judge and that too on corruptio charges. A precedent-setting move which woul have extraordinary implications for the polity as a whole, would normally have required the applicatio of the collective consciousness of Parliament. Bu here was a case which appears to have bee viewed exclusively in politically partisan terms, eac party indulging freely in the game of political one-upmanship. The combined Opposition which decided on moving an impeachment motion against Justice Ramaswami never even considered mobilising the support of the Congress on such an important matter. The Congress, which was in the Opposition at the time the motion was tabled, never eve considered mobilising support of the Opposition parties either to have the motion dropped in toto or to work out a strategy by which impeachment could be avoided while the impugned judged was eased out of the Supreme Court.

If this was the situation in the very initial stages, the distance between the Congress and non-Congress parties at the later and more crucial stage of actual debate on the motion was even wider. Though it was common knowledge that the motion did not even have the ghost of a chance of adoption without the support of almost all sections of the two Houses of Parliament, the Congress and the Opposition parties behaved as if the impeachment motion was just like any other subject to be debated and voted upon, with each party adhering to its own ideological line. Indeed, it seemed a purely fortuitous phenomenon that some of the major national parties, who do not normally see eye to eye on many national issues, displayed rare unity in deciding favourably in respect of tabling the impeachment motion. Even after 108 members had signed the motion, not all of them appeared to have entertained the notion in their minds that the motion would ever be admitted or actually come up for debate and decision. Within the Congress, and within some of the smaller parties too, there seemed to be a subconscious feeling that the motion was being tabled for the mere reason that the Opposition parties wanted to embarrass the Congress, a habitual obsession (or an obsessive habit?) of the Opposition parties. The Opposition move was, therefore, dismissed as yet another example of political opportunism. Ground realities, and the political situation in the country, were also such as to preclude the thought that the Opposition threat to impeach the judge would ever be translated into action. On February 28, 1991, when the motion was handed over to then Speaker, Rabi Ray, the preoccupation of Members of Parliament was over the coming elections, the dissolution of the Lok Sabha already looming imminent. Under the circumstances, the Opposition parties thought that the threat to impeach a Supreme Court judge was a good stick to beat the Congress with, particularly since the Congress leaders and spokesmen had made utterances deriding the Opposition parties for their opportunist threats and pooh-poohing such threates as idle. During the debate on the motion, at least two Congress MPs traced the motivation for the motion to the Opposition's alleged strategy to convert the impeachment matter as an anti-Congress election propaganda theme. In the first week of May, when a debate on the impeachment motion fell imminent, a number of Opposition leaders made free use of the media to tender unsolicited advice to the Congress on how it should conduct itself. Jaswant Singh of the BJP, for instance, pointed out that it was an "awesome occasion" for Parliament to be called upon to perform a judicial function and the Congress must consider its far-reaching implications. Jaipal Reddy, of the Janata Dal, was more blunt. More than Justice Ramaswami, he said, it was the ruling party on trial and if the Congress sabotaged the motion it would stand exposed before the bar of the people. Virtually justifying the undercurrents of fear in the Congress in 1991, Reddy said that the Opposition would make the impeachment issue of major "campaign point" against the Congress. Other Opposition leaders had already pre-judged the ruling party's options and had launched a whispering campaign that the Congress would never support the motion. However, the fact remains that none of the leaders of Opposition parliamentary parties examined the wisdom of opening a direct channel of communciation to the Congress for evolving a common strategy to achieve their objective. Strangely, even Narasimha Rao who made much of the efficacy of a consensual approach to national issues, did not feel the need to confer with the Opposition leaders. Indeed, he did not consider it necessary even to confer with his own party leaders till a few days before the D-Day (May 10, 1993) on how the party should respond to the motion! All this is not to say that intra-party confabulations would have altered the scenario dramatically or rendered a debate on the motion unnecessary. It is only to bemoan the fact of the absence of Parliament's collective consciousness in dealing with an issue as important as impeaching a judge.

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BUT let that pass. A large number of MPs appear to have been both ill-informed and mis-informed about the issues germane to the motion. Many Congress MPs had the impression that the impeachment motion had been admitted on March 12, 1991 in the teeth of opposition of the Congress party. In fact, neither the sponsors of the motion nor the Congress even had the opportunity to react to the Speaker's announcement admitting the motion. The Speaker had begun making the announcement around 7.45 PM and he had finished reading the text of the motion and adjourned the House *sine die* at 7.47 PM. By the time the Congress MPs had realised what had happened the Speaker had left the House and gone into his chamber. A handful of Congress MPs had begun shouting in objection, but by the time they had moved towards the well of the House, it was all over. Secondly, there seemed to be a general impression among many members, belonging to both sides, that the motion was admitted first (on March 12) and the three-member Committee of Judges was appointed later (on March 15). The Congress MP, R. Prabhu, even mentioned these dates in his speech during the debate. The fact is that Rabi Ray had also announced the names of the three judges while announcing that he was admitting the motion as he had found it in order. Ray, I ascertained during the course of my inquiries, had first satisfied himself that, on the basis of the charges listed in the motion, there was indeed a *prima facie* case for further investigation, and since the motion had also met with the other requirements of Article 124(4) of the Constitution of India, read with Section 3 of the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968, he decided to admit it. The choice of the judges named for the Committee was also not entirely his own, but arrived at after such consulations with the Chief Justice of India as was called for. Ray, it must be assumed, could not have known of the background, status, or legal acumen of the members chosen without knowledgeable guidance. This point is worth bearing in mind in the light of a development that took place during the run-up to the debate on the motion. Some Tamil Nadu MPs began circulating a draft of a memorandum proposed to be submitted to the Prime Minister seeking an inquiry into allegations made by Justice Ramaswami, in his note of objection against the validity of the status of the three-member Committee, against Justice P.D. Desai in particular. The note had alleged that Justice Desai had also incurred undue expenditure of Rs 17 lakhs as the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court for renovating his residence. The move of the MPs failed for want of support even from the Congress MPs.

It may also be pertinent to record that although the voluminous documentation that had accumulated in respect of the case against Justice Ramaswami between the time the three-member Judges' Committee began its inquiry and the time it had concluded it and submitted its findings was made available to all the MPs a few days before the D-Day (May 10), hardly a handful of MPs had found the time or the inclination to study the material. This accounted for the many assumptions of the impugned judge's innocence, as articulated by the Congress MPs who participated in the debate, and also for the wide-eyed disbelief of the charges on the part of some of the Congress MPs after listening to Kapil Sibal's six-hour defence of the judge. Had the MPs, especially of the Congress party, really understood the seriousness of the charges and the nature of the "unequivocal and clear" findings of the Judges' Committee, Sibal would not have succeeded in making such a powerful impact on their minds. Indeed, it is claimed (among others by Mani Shankar Aiyar) that Sibal's eloquence and persuasive arguments had influenced the majority of the Congress MPs who had favoured voting in favour of the motion change their minds overnight. According to Aiyar, at a meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party held on the morning of May 11 and attended by as many as 44 (!) members, not one from north, south, east or west spoke up for voting in favour, "while everyone who spoke wanted to vote against". Aiyar adds: "Clearly, the open-minded Congress was as split as the close-minded Opposition was united. Clearly, too, if a conscience vote was permitted, more than one-third of those present and voting would vote against."

Mani Shankar Aiyar has at least been honest enough to confess that till the very end, that it is, till a week before the D-Day, he had taken no interest in the Ramaswami case. However, this applies equally to many of the Congress MPs regardless of the region they represent. The only exception were the other MPs from Tamil Nadu who had begun to work themselves into a high pother at least ten days before the D-Day. That aspect of the story can wait awhile, while we see how Aiyar himself began to interest himself in the case. "The first I ever paid attention," he says, "was when Rangarajan Kumaramangalam, as a lawyer and former Minister for Law, briefed the Tamil Nadu Congress MPs group the week before the impeachment motion came up, of the issues at stake." It was a very brief briefing, perhaps five minutes in all, but he said enough for Aiyar to recognise that it was not an open-and-shut case and that Justice Ramaswami was not irretrievably guilty as he had assumed to be on the basis of glancing at newspaper headlines over the previous three years. According to Aiyar, other Tamil Nadu Congress MPs were clearly much better informed. This episode is being cited here for its limited relevance to support the point that had the MPs comprehended the gravity of the very act of an impeachment motion being moved for the first time in Parliament, they would have, perhaps, informed themselves better. Had they done so, it might well have been that their stand might have been clearer.

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LET us, at this stage, go back to the beginning. There is no doubt that the desire among the Opposition leaders to make a political issue out of the Ramaswami affair received a strong stimulus from the unprecedented resolution passed on February 1, 1991 by the Supreme Court Bar Association calling for the impeachment of Ramaswami and calling upon the Chief Justice not to assign him any judicial work. The resolution climaxed a prolonged agitation mounted by the Bar almost from the day newspaper reports mentioned the gist of audit objections raised against the huge expenditure incurred by the judge when he was Chief Justice of the Punjab and Haryana High Court. This was around April-May 1990. The Congress MPs were to contend later that the agitating advocates were mostly from Punjab and hence it was basically an offensive against a South Indian judge launched by the (northern) Punjabi lobby. The first surfacing of the north-south divide, this. It was to snowball later. However, the charge of a northern oppression of a southern judge was wholly untenable when juxtaposed against the plea made in defence of the judge, namely, he had consistently refused to release arrested militants on bail, contrary to the practice of his predecessors. Since most, if not all, of the agitating advocates happened to be Hindus who ought to have been happy over the judge's refusal of bail to militants, they would have had no cause to complain against him!

Since the subject of grant of bail has figured in some form or the other in the Ramaswami impeachment matter, it is worth examining it. According to Prashant Bhushan, a Supreme Court advocate, who incidentally initiated the Committee on Judicial Accountability to implead itself in the case, it was the late Rajiv Gandhi who brought up the bail theme first. This he did in a telephone call to Rabi Ray, even while the impeachment motion was pending with him, to plead that the motion may not be admitted, since he (Rajiv Gandhi) "had sent Justice Ramaswami to the Punjab High Court to ensure that terrorists were not granted bail by the courts in Punjab and Justice Ramaswami had fulfilled that assurance". Rabi Ray had made no response either way. Rajiv Gandhi's intervention apparently came after a delegation of senior Congress MPs had called on Ray to request him to drop the matter and had failed in their mission. During the debate, the Congress members were to harp again and again on the courage of Justice Ramaswami in agreeing to go to Punjab when most judges refused the offer. Here is a full quote of the relevant submission of Mani Shankar Aiyar in his speech:

> During the period Justice Ramaswami served in Punjab following Operation Black Thunder II, November 1987 to October 1989, there was a proxy war on, abetted by Pakistan and possibly other foreign intelligence agencies. It was a time when judges of the Punjab and Haryana High Court were not only subject to the most serious threats, they were also in danger of being cajoled by 'enemies of India with crores and crores in their hands, not crores of rupees but dollars', for subverting our judiciary. Yet, when that proxy war was being conducted against India, this Tamilian, of whom I am extremely proud, who proved himself to be an Indian first, by conducting the affairs of the Punjab and Haryana High Court in such a manner from November 1987 through October 1989 that even in the surcharged political atmosphere of 1990 and 1991, nobody has suggested that there was an element of impropriety, of corruption, of treachery about his actions as a judge. I do not think that a model of rectitude in court, without a single stain in his character, when he steps into the official portion of his residence, can suddenly become a monster, a demon, a *rakshasa* when he goes into his private bedroom.

Justice Ramaswami received a good conduct certificate also from the former Union Home Minister, Buta Singh, who blamed vested interests for the campaign against the "backward class" judge, who as the Chief Justice of the Punjab and Haryana High Court had always lent his support to reservations. Buta Singh was apparently recalling Ramaswami's best known judgement declaring that the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe candidates who secured jobs in general competition would not be counted as reserved candidates.

Is there another side to this chorus of Ramaswami's good conduct? According to a Chandigarh-based senior journalist, the question of granting or refusing bail does not arise since all appeals against the decisions of the designated sessions court go directly to the Supreme Court. "In any case," says this journalist, "throughout the two-year stint of Ramaswami in Chandigarh, TADA accused continued to be released on bail and there was not a single conviction." So much for the bail theme! If only as an intersting sidelight, the comments of this journalist on some other aspect of the judge's functioning is worth noting. Says he:

> The only 'patriotic' thing Ramaswami is remembered for in Chandigarh is the introduction of a grand Independence Day function in the High Court premises. Almost half the judges boycotted the function as they were all asked to come in a procession with their gowns in and preceded by carriers of silver maces. The function is one among many of his steps reversed by his successor. He had also appointed about ten women translators after conducting their interviews at Shimla. This group was nicknamed the 'IAS girls' or 'interviewed at Shimla' girls. All of them were sacked soon after the judge's transfer.

So much, then, for Kapil Sibal's claim that he was a simple man of austere habits!

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THE Congress leadership went through an agonising phase of indecisiveness and anxiety all through the week preceding the D-Day. However, it was not as if the Prime Minister was not seized of the seriousness of the evolving situation. Indeed, there is good reason to believe that for months, attempts were being made at Narasimha Rao's instance, to persuade the judge to resign voluntarily and thus save the Congress the embarrassment of having to disgrace him on the floor of the Lok Sabha. The intermediaries who were either pressurising or persuading the judge to resign had all the time in the world for their mission. The unanimous report of the inquiry committee was submitted to the Lok Sabha Speaker, Shivraj Patil, on July 20, 1992. The Union Law Ministry was duly informed of this by the Supreme Court Registrar. The report lay on Shivraj Patil's table for the next five months. It was tabled in the House in December 1992. The report, having become public property, was available to MPs from then onwards, but for all they cared it could have as well gathered dust elsewhere other than the Parliament Library! The Prime Minister and the Congress—for that matter the Opposition parties too—had fuurther breathing time to avert a showdown, because though the budget session of Parliament began in February 1993, the D-Day was fixed only for May 10.

Four persons are identified by knowledgeable sources in the Congress as the intermediaries who carried messages to and from the judge and the party leadership: Dr Subramaniam Swamy, Tamil Nadu Congress MPs, M. Krishnaswami annd Vallal Peruman, and the Chief Election Commissioner, T.N. Seshan, though the services of the last-named appear to have been sought only in the "terminal" (terminal for Ramaswami's judicial tenure) stages. Their mission was to persuade the judge to agree to a compromise agreement—this phrase is used advisedly lest the use of the term "deal" be considered pejorative—by which the judge would resign after the impeachment motion is defeated in Parliament. Even this formula was worked out only after the judge dismissed all suggestions of a voluntary resignation well before the date for the D-Day was fixed. Some Congress MPs claim that, all along, the effort of the party leadership was to prevent the impeachment motion "ripening" to a stage where it will perforce have to be debated and voted upon. Between December and April, neither the northern nor the southern (or the western or eastern) party MPs, were seriously worried over the fate of the motion. The general view, however, as expressed by a senior Minister, Sitaram Kesari, was that after the experience of the Bofors controversy, the party could not afford to be seen supporting corruption at high places, irrespective of the personality or personalities involved. Indeed, this was a view shared across the board, including the Prime Minister himself who told a handful of MPs who called on him on the morning of May 3 that the party may have to support the motion if only to escape the charge it always tended to shield the guilty. In this context, there is good reason to believe that no exercises had been ordered in the Law Ministry throughout 1992 to find ways and means to save the judge. On the other hand, Kotla Vijayabhaskar Reddy, who was Law Minister for the better part of the year, wrote to the Chief Justice of India not to allocate work to the judge till he was absolved of the charges against him.

The mission of the intermediaries having only partially succeeded, in the sense that the outcome of the motion and the judge's resignation came to be directly linked, the next stage would be the trial, with Parliament discharging its judicial functions for the first time. To be fair to the Congress, the natural inclination of the Prime Minister and most of the senior Ministers was to vote for the motion. It was on the strength of this perceived sentiment among the members that the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Vidya Charan Shukla, secured the Prime Minister's approval to issue a whip requiring the presence of the party MPs in the House on May 10. As to the nature of the vote which the MPs would cast on the fateful day, it was tacitly agreed among the party managers, to wit Shukla, R. Kumaramangalam and Mukul Wasnik, that the decision would be left to the Leader who would be expected to indicate his mind at a scheduled meeting of the Parliamentary Party on May 7.

The entire scenario was to change between May 3 and May 10, and once again on May 11, the second day of the extended debate. How perceptions changed, how pressures built up, and how the pendulum swung from one extreme to the other makes for an intersting, albeit, depressing story. Mind you, the party's options were still open at that stage, and the choice lay only between a "yes" and a "no" vote. The abstention option had not even figured in any discussion at any level. If it had figured at the higher levels, it was kept a secret, possibly for resort when the other two options were found unexercisable.

(To be Continued)

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Tibet and Indian Diplomacy

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

In the hurly-burly of day-to-day politics, Tibet has receded quite a distance in our horizon. Even when we talk about the political environment in our neighbourhood, Tibet rarely figures in it.

In the discussions with the Chinese, whether in official or non-official capacity, at the governmental or political level, we have practically ceased to raise the question of Tibet and the Tibetan people. But the Chinese always make it a point to impress upon us the benefit of Chinese rule for the Tibetan people and almost inevitably remind us—sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly—that India recognises Tibet as being a part of the Chinese People's Republic.

What is intriguing is that even in the early fifties when India-China relations were raised to a state of euphoria, Tibet invariably figured in the talks between the leaders of the two countries, and India's special position with regard to Tibet was conceded by the Chinese side, so much so that the Indian Prime Minister's interest and concern about the Dalai Lama and his relations with the Panchen Lama did not evoke the Chinese criticism that this amounted to interference in the internal affairs of China. But the entire situation changed in the late fifties, when with the simultaneous launching by China of a persecution drive against the Dalai Lama forcing him to escape with his entourage to India in the summer of 1959, came the first armed clashes by the Chinese border guards with Indian frontier patrols culminating in the blitz invasion of the Chinese army into the Indian territory in October 1962.

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THE irony of it all has been that what is known as the Indian-China border talks in the last thirty years and more, really related to the frontier-line between India and Tibet, while the Dalai Lama, who alone is acknowledged by the Tibetan people as their leader, both spiritual and temporal, has been forced into exile in this country throughout these three decades and a half. If one were to go by past precedents—which the Chinese are fond of quoting to substantiate any claims in the international context—then the Tibetan side should have a place in any India-China border talks.

The Dalai Lama's dramatic arrival in India alongwith nearly a hundred thousand of his following was an event whose full historic significance was perhaps not fully perceived at the time by most political observers. It was not just a leader of a country being forced to become a refugee in another country. The entire mystique of the Tibetan politics suddenly came out into the open before the entire world. What is indeed noteworthy is that in the totally new surroundings, the Dalai Lama and his following coming out of the cloistered retreat of Lhasa, adjusted themselves with remarkable felicity, transmitting effectively their message, both spiritual and political, to diverse sections of the world public. In all these years, the Dalai Lama has grown as a world figure, impressing one by his serenity and wisdom. And he has installed into his loyal following a sense of dignity and purpose—no feeling of depression, no air of a lost cause. Instead, an amazing reservoir of silent confidence, reflecting the sheer majesty of their native land—by no means a lost horizon.

Looking back, one has to concede that after the first flush of excitement on the Dalai Lama's appearance on the world stage, there came a phase of low tide in the international interest in Tibet, almost synchronising with the focus shifting to Deng Xiaoping's modernisation programme in China. In the last three years the pendulum has swung again, particularly after the Tiananmen massacre, and there has come over a marked resurgence of interest in Tibet as could be perceived during the Dalai Lama's recent tour abroad. With the end of the Cold War, the concern for human rights has become a major plank in the consciousness of the world public and this is reflected in the policy posture of many governments. The issue of human rights figured prominently in Clinton's election campaign and has become a key item in the new Administration's policy programme.

This was demonstrated in ample measure during the Dalai Lama's recent visit to Washington, where his meeting with President Clinton proved to be more than a formality. And the British Prime Minister on his part moved beyond his old reticence while meeting the Tibetan leader. It needs to be noted that a conference of international law specialists held in London in January this year upheld the Tibetan people's right to self-determination. World attention to the violation of human rights in Tibet has been intensified and has become widespread. Apart from such bodies as the Amnesty International and the Asia Watch, among others, this issue has been taken up by the International Commission of Jurists and France Libertes.

Viewed in the background of renewed world-wide interest and concern about Tibet, one cannot but notice the absence of any corresponding campaign in our country in defence of human rights in Tibet as we have had for South Africa, Nepal or for that matter Burma, despite the fact that the Dalai Lama and his entire government-in-exile are located in Dharamsala. The reason for this is perhaps a misplaced fear that any campaign for human rights in Tibet might damage the prospect of restoring normalcy in our relations with China. It may be noted that the Dalai Lama himself has been saying unreservedly that he welcomes the progressive development of China's economy and standing in the world, and along with it, he wants the extension of democracy and well-being of the people of Tibet.

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BRIEFLY, the points of concern about China's policy in Tibet may be noted here. First in this list is the large-scale colonisation of the Han population in Tibet. The official Chinese figure is that there are four to five million Chinese in the whole of Tibet, of which there are only 90,000 in what is specified as the Autonomous Region of Tibet, whose population numbers just three million. It is estimated that the total Chinese population in Tibet today is well over seven million. If this planned population transfer continues, it could soon bring about a demographic trnsformation by which the Tibetans would be reduced to a minority in their own country.

Secondly, the growing militarisation of the Tibet region. Apart from the increase in the stationing of Chinese garrisons in Tibet is the setting up of a very important nuclear weapons R & D Centre, known as the Ninth Academy in Tibet which is responsible for designing China's nuclear arsenal, detonation development and radiochemistry. Several dozens of China's nuclear warheads are located in Tibet. Missile bases have been set up in Tibet. Five years ago, China carried out in Tibet what was officially described as "chemical defence manoeuvres in the high altitude zone to test newly-developed equipment".

This aspect of China's policy in Tibet has a direct bearing on our country's strategic concern. There could be no other plausible target for these nuclear weapons and missiles in Tibet except India. In this context, the Dalai Lama's repeated call for transforming the whole of Tibet into a weapons-free zone of peace assumes pointed significance. In his well-known Strasbourg Proposal in 1988, he recalled Tibet's "historic status as a neutral buffer state contributing to the stability of the entire continent".

Thirdly, the question of dumping radioactive nuclear wastes in Tibet. It is not known as to how much of radioactive waste comes out of the top secret Ninth Academy of the Chinese defence establishment in Tibet. It is known that Tibet has the world's biggest uranium reserves, and there are reports of many local Tibetans having perished after drinking contaminated water in the proximity of a uranium mine in Amdo. In 1991, Greenpeace exposed plans to ship toxic sludge from the USA to China for use as 'fertiliser' in Tibet. And there are other reports of certain European firms negotiating with the Chinese authorities for dumping nuclear toxic wastes in Tibet.

The fall-out is a matter of urgent concern for all those neighbouring countries through which flow the great rivers of Asia originating from Tibet: Oxus, Indus, Brahmaputra, Irrawady, Mekong, apart from the two great rivers of China, Yangtze and Huang Ho. If these rivers are polluted, it will be a frightening hazard for millions of people on the Asian mainland, particularly for the people in South Asia, of which the two most populated are India and Bangladesh.

In three decades and more there has been serious environmental destruction of Tibet. There has been massive deforestation of the rich forest belts of Tibet. In Amdo province alone, it is estimated that about 50 million trees have been felled in the last forty years. Southern Tibet has been equally denuded of forests. The Tibetans do not use much timber, most of the wood product have gone to the other parts of China. This massive deforestation has led to serious soil erosion and flood. Today, Brahmaputra and Indus, Yangtze and Huang Ho are among the five most heavily-silted rivers in the world. Deforestation endangers the monsoon balance, which is of direct concern for us. With the denuding of the great pastures of Tibet, desertification has begun.

All these are matters of direct concern for many countries. Without infringing upon the sovereignty of any Latin American country, the ecological preservation of the Amazon River basin inspired a remarkable international initiative. Similarly, it is time that the preservation of the unique environmental balance of Tibet became the concern of the world community, in which the countries directly affected next door have to come forward. This is an issue of direct international concern as important as the upholding of human rights, since it endangers the very life and living of billions of people linked by Nature to Tibet, its flora and fauna.

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EVEN when the Dalai Lama arrived in India in 1959, he underlined that he and his people "do not cherish any feelings of enmity and hatred against the great Chinese people" and sought "the creation of a favourable climate" for negotiations for a peaceful settlement. There was, however, no contact between the Dalai Lama's establishment and the Chinese Government until 1979. This is understandable because these were the years of the Cultural Revolution and the rule of the Gang of Four which proved disastrous for China. It was only in February 1979 that Gyalo Thandup, an elder brother of the Dalai Lama, received an invitation from Deng Xiaoping and made a private visit to Beijing where he was met by high Chinese officials. He was also received by Deng Xiaoping himself.

Since then, negotiations have dragged on. In the course of these tenuous contacts, the Dalai Lama himself wrote a letter to Deng Xiaoping in March 1981, emphasising the need for "our common wisdom in a spirit of tolerance and broad-mindedness". Allthough there was no direct response to his letter, the contacts continued, in the course of which the Chinese Government said that everything could be discussed except the question of Tibet's complete independence. The Chinese Prime Minister, Li Peng, repeated this when he came to Delhi in December 1991.

In September 1992, the Tibetan side appointed a three-member delegation and sought to resume the talks with the Chinese Government. While awaiting Beijing's response, the Dalai Lama has made it clear that he would like to start negotiations for the peaceful solution of the Tibet problem without any preconditions. He, however, threw in a significant suggestion that China could take the "one-country-two-systems" approach with regard to Tibet as it has done about Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Tibet today presents an important issue before Indian diplomacy. Without in any way changing its formal stand on Tibet—no matter whatever might have been the internal controversy over the wisdom of that stand—New Delhi can certainly raise all the issues of direct concern, strategic and environmental, that the situation in Tibet poses for this country. Meanwhile, there is need for a broad-based movement in our country for greater awareness about what is happening in Tibet today, so that the government may be in a position to take up with the Chinese Government the concern and interests of our people with regard to our northern neighbour, Tibet. ■

(Courtesy. *The Hindustan Times*)

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Emerging International Trading Order

The Story of the Uruguay Round—II

S.P. SHUKLA

This is a comprehensive and unique account and analysis of the Uruguay Round by one of the major players from the inception, until recently. The author, a former Finance Secretary of India, was India's Permanent Representative to GATT at Geneva for several years, and is credited with playing a leading role in formulating the South's position on different aspects of the Round until recent years. He presents here a historical background of the Round's evolution in terms of North-South issues at the initial, middle and end phases of the negotiations. The article also provides a critique of the Draft Dunkel Text and analyses the current status of the Round for the South. It is being reproduced—with due acknowledgement and the author's consent—from Third World Economics, *published fortnightly from Penang, Malaysia by the Third World Network, a grouping of organisations and individuals involved in Third World and development issues. The first instalment of this article appeared in* Mainstream *(July 17, 1993). This is the concluding part.*

—Editor

V: Weakening of the South's Position

This was the time when India and Brazil could have explored the possibility of a workable compromise, perhaps with the help of EEC, on the question of intellectual property rights, without giving up the essence of their stand. Perhaps, a third stream of negotiations could have been started outside the juridical framework of GATT and in collaboration with the WIPO, to negotiate the substantive question of standards of intellectual property protection. In framing the mandate of such negotiations, care could have been taken to weave in the paramount consideration of public interest to counterbalance the rights of intellectual property holders. In short, some solution as was found on the services issue at the Punta-del-Este meeting could have been attempted. But in the event, no such attempt was made and what transpired was a total accommodation of whatever the industrialised countries wanted to negotiate in the area of intellectual property rights.

It is interesting to recall here that this was also the time when the USA had made announcements about the use of Super and Special 301 provisions of their trade act against countries such as India and Brazil. Bilaterally, these pressures were being mounted on all those who were not willing to fall in line with the US stand on intellectual property rights. This was also the period which witnessed both in India and Brazil, political developments of major significance on the domestic scene. Their negotiating stances showed progressive weakening of the political will to hold on firmly to their positions. Mutual distrust too developed and the major players in the Third World started suspecting each other of preparing to cut bilateral deals with the industrialised countries. Inevitably, the last bastion of the united stand of the developing countries, the united front of India and Brazil, too collapsed.

The April 1989 agreement on intellectual property rights conceded the negotiations on substantive matters of adequacy and effectiveness of intellectual property rights, without any strong and clear formulation on primacy of public interest or social goals, without a priori exclusion of certain vital areas from patent protection and without any provision for separating these negotiations from the internal package of the GATT negotiations on trade in goods. This amounted to a basic departure from the earlier stand in two ways. First, the issues falling within the sovereign economic space of the participating developing countries were squarely brought within the purview of the GATT negotiations. Second, by not taking any measures to separate these negotiations from the GATT stream of negotiations on trade in goods, the cross-retaliation possibility, which was so assiduously kept at bay at Punta-del-Este, was conceded.

There was also another important fall-out of this event. After India agreed to this basic departure, it lost credibility in the eyes of the developing countries. The impression went round that the show of firmness that the negotiators were making in the period from September 1986 to December 1988 was only a facade not backed by a firm political support at the capital. No negotiator can hope to muster support from other countries on difficult issues involving disagreement and even confrontation with major powers, if those countries suspect the inherent strength of the stand or even the sincerity of its propounders.

In the period that followed, there was progressive slippage of the Indian position not only in the area of intellecual property rights but also in other areas of negotiations including agriculture and textiles. Indeed, it appears that there was no position to be held firmly anywhere. There was no Maginot line to be defended at any cost. What was worse, the adversary appeared to be aware that there was no Maginot line! The inevitable result has been the adverse outcome of the negotiations in the critical areas. The Dunkel Draft Text (DDT) which embodies the most likely outcome of the UR negotiations represents such an outcome. It is to the brief examination of DDT that we now turn.

VI: Dunkel Draft Text and Cross-Retaliation

Our most important objective concerning the negotiations on the new round was to prevent the emergence of the new paradigm or, at the minimum, to take the sting out of it. DDT has put an end to this objective. What emerges in DDT is one single "final act", of which rules relating to trade in goods, rules relating to the intellectual property protection and those on regulation of services and investment will be integral parts. The participating countries must accept all or they are out of the new system altogether. It is a take-it-or-leave-it document. Cross-retaliation stands sanctified and incorporated in the common dispute settlement procedures of DDT. The continued access for our exports of goods to industrialised countries' markets will be conditional upon our subscribing to what is prescribed in the areas of services, intellectual property rights and investment. If we fail to adhere to DDT's provisions in these new areas, the industrialised countries will be within their rights under the new system to retaliate by raising tariffs on our goods exported to their markets.

It is argued that some safeguards have been incorporated in the new system which would go to help the weaker members of the system. It is pointed out that cross-retaliation will have to be authorised by the multilateral body under the new system and will no longer be a unilateral decision of any one country. Moreover, cross-retaliation will be resorted to only if retaliation within the same sector or area is found unfeasible. That is to say, for a breach of obligation in a given area of regulations, such as intellectual property, the remedy of retaliation will have to be tried first within that area. It is only if that is found unfeasible or inadequate, that then the question of cross-retaliation will arise in other areas, such as goods. Last, there are provisions for appeal and arbitration to ensure the ends of justice.

It is true that cross-retaliation will have to be "authorised" multilaterally under the new system. The sting of cross-retaliation will not be any less painful because it will have to be so authorised. The essence of the objection to cross-retaliation lay in the opposition to the extension of the GATT paradigm from the border transactions to the hitherto inviolable sovereign economic space. That the entry into this space will be sanctioned by a multilateral body does not change its violative character. Developing countries have not entered the service areas in the industrialised world. Nor do they hold any significant share in the intellectual property in those countries. The fact is that in the areas of intellectual property or services, there is very little that the industrialised countries can retaliate sectorally against the developing countries.

It is these circumstances which, in the first place, led the industrialised countries to introduce the idea of cross-retaliation through a common dispute settlement procedure for goods, services and intellectual property rights. For the same reason, the provision requiring that the sectoral retaliation possibilities be exhausted before taking resort to cross-retaliation and the provisions relating to appeal and arbitration will turn out to be relatively empty procedural shells with little substantive relief.

The naked truth is that the new system will confer international legitimacy on what, under the existing GATT system, can only be described as illegitimate power play or unilateral arm-twisting. The irony is that in their anxiety not to antagonise the USA and thereby to save themselves from her wrath under Special and Super 301, the developing countries compromised in the multilateral negotiations, particularly in the area of intellectual property rights. And having done that, they have now achieved the same end-result as a part of the systematic operation of the new GATT embodied in the final act. The only difference is that the US action will now acquire legitimacy in the eyes of international law!

VII: Intellectual Property Rights

It is neither possible not necessary to examine all the areas of substantive discipline incorporated in DDT. It should suffice to look into the basic features of some important areas, such as intellectual property rights, agriculture, services, and textiles.

The provisions regarding intellectual property protection in DDT are so stringent that they call for the entire amendment of the patent laws in many developing countries, including India. Products will be as patentable as processes. No field will be outside the purview of patentability. Even atomic energy and space technology will have to abide by the discipline. The period of patent protection which is not more than fourteen years under the Indian patent law will be made uniformly twenty years for all patents.

The patents for food, drugs and medicine items which, under the current dispensation, have a shorter life of five years from the date of sealing the patent or seven years from the date of application, shall not be subjected to such a special regime on the grounds of public interest. Importation will amount to the working of patents, that is to say, imports may substitute indigenous manufacturing, if the patent holder so decides. Compulsory licensing which is a potent instrument in the hands of the government to induce transfer of technology on reasonable terms will no longer be a matter of implementing the provisions of the patent act. Each such case will be a matter of judicial review and decision. All this will mean higher outgoes on royalties, less of indigenous production, more imports, and all round cost-escalation in manufacturing 'high tech' products.

There are two aspects of this new regime which need to be stressed. First, the impact on the pharmaceutical industry. Under the Indian Patents Act of 1970, the indigenous pharmaceutical and drugs industry has developed rapidly and efficiently. The growth of this industry has facilitated larger availability of medicines at relatively inexpensive prices. This factor is of special significance in our country where large masses are victims of many diseases and the public health care system is still very inadequate. The drastic changes in the patent laws that DDT will enforce will result inevitably in higher prices for drugs and medicines and greater dependence on the multinationals holding near monopolies in the knowledge and technology in this area.

Secondly, the impact on the agriculture will be equally significant. Under the Indian Patents Act of 1970, inventions relating to agricultural and horticultural products and processes are not patentable. DDT requires that there be "effective sui-generis system" for the protection of plant varieties. For the first time, this area will come under a multilateral surveillance. While apparently the freedom of developing a national system of protection of plant varieties is recognised under DDT, the "effectiveness" of the system is to be determined multilaterally. If this was not the intention, there would be no need to introduce any provision whatsoever in DDT regarding the protection of plant varieties.

In any multiateral determination of effectiveness, the same pressures will operate which have so successfully brought the developing world to their knees in the area of intellectual property protection in the UR negotiations. It is, therefore, unrealistic to put too much faith in the autonomy of the national "sui-generis system" permissible under DDT.

More importantly, the existing international convention on the protection of plant varieties and its 'evolution' in recent years is a pointer in the direction in which the events will most likely move in regard to 'multilateral' determination of "effectiveness". The recent amendments to the convention have extinguished the exemptions earlier available to farmers and researchers. This is how the "effectiveness" of the convention has been "enhanced". It will be less than prudent to imagine that the same kind for regime or protection of plant varieties will not be insisted upon by the industrialised countries in the name of improving the "effectiveness" of any system for the protection of plant varieties. And with this, the whole area of use of improved seeds will become the subject of a new kind of patent protection.

It is reported that certain caveats or 'footnotes' are being suggested by the Indian Government to limit the adverse impact of DDT in this area. These footnotes are reported to be dealing with the questions of drawing a distinction between importation and working of a patent, of exclusion of certain naturally occurring biological material from patentability, of preserving the 'farmers' and/or 'researchers' exemption in the regime of the protection of plant varieties. If these caveats do get introduced, there will be some improvement in DDT from our point of view. However, these qualifications by themselves do not, in any way, alter the whole gamut of adverse effects which have been briefly described earlier. What is more, it is not very clear whether these suggestions constitute the non-negotiable bottom-line of the Indian position. If the recent history of these negotiations is any guide, such a posture on the part of the Indian negotiators seems unlikely. In other words, when the crunch comes, will there be no compromise on these minimal improvements sought? This is the question.

VIII: Agriculture

The next important area which deserves attention is agriculture. the most striking feature of the DDT discipline on agriculture is its comprehensiveness. The pendulum here seems to be moving from one extreme to the other. Until the end of the Tokyo Round of negotiations, the GATT had generally followed the doctrine of minimal interference in national regimes, on the one hand, and largely maintaining the prevailing shares in the world market for the big players, on the other. In contrast, DDT seeks to bring under its discipline the entire gamut of the export subsidies, the border regime of import restrictions and the domestic support regimes. What is more, the new discipline refuses to recognise the vastly different role that agriculture plays in countries like India and China, on the one hand, and the industrialised countries, on the other. The leeway it provides to the category of the developing countries is marginal and does not correct the misconceived uniformity of its approach.

For the first time, the participating countries, including the developing countries, will, under the new regime, bind themselves to reducing/eliminating export subsidies. The developing countries will be allowed to maintain freight subsidy or marketing assistance. But it will not be permissible for us, for example, to continue the scheme of government reimbursing the losses on account of exports of commodities like sugar or wheat. Nor will it be permissible to resort to canalisation of exports through a state trading organisation or, for that matter, to minimum export prices.

It is true that the big players who are heavy subsidisers will also be subject to the discipline and that may raise the world market price of commodities like sugar which is often depressed as a result of such heavy subsidies. But it must be remembered that the discipline on these subsidies is going to be introduced gradually. DDT envisages that over a period of six years, the subsidised volume of exports will be reduced by 21 per cent while the budgetary support for export subsidies will be reduced by 36 per cent in terms of value. Moreover, it may be possible for the big players to reach these prescribed percentages on an overall basis, while retaining high subsidies selectively on certain products. Thus the EEC could reduce its export assistance on oilseeds while maintaining it on sugar which, in effect, will mean some advantage for a few competing exporters like the USA or Brazil but little or no advantage for a large number of cane sugar exporting developing countries.

On the import restrictions, the regime prescribes that such restrictions can be maintained only on the grounds of balance of payment considerations. Moreover, such restrictions have to be price based, that is, in terms of tariffs only; no quantitative restrictions or bans will be permissible. The current quantitative restrictions will have to be converted into tariff equivalents and a commitment will have to be taken to reduce the tariffs by 36 per cent over a period of six years. There is also a provision regarding assured minimum access of 3.5 per cent of the value of the the domestic output to be reached over a period of ten years, but 40 per cent of such access will have to be provided forthwith

It is well known that import restrictions on many of our agricultural products, whether it is wheat, milk, rice, or edible oilseeds or oils, contain an element of protection besides the obvious balance of payment consideration. Moreover, the tariff equivalents to be worked out on the basis of a comparison of domestic and international prices may not be as effective as the quantitative restrictions, either from the balance of payment point of view or for the purpose of protection. As we move towards convertibility of the currency, it will be progressively more difficult to justify the restrictions on the balance of payment grounds. All in all, the effective instrument of border protection which a country like the USA has long been using under GATT through the "timeless waiver" that she obtained to protect some of its agricultural products, will no longer be available to countries like ours whose agriculture will continue to be in need of effective protection for some more time.

The most draconian aspect of the new discipline is in the area of domestic support regimes. As stated earlier, the industrialised countries have enjoyed, for a long time, complete autonomy in the management of their agriculture. They pursued strong and complex regimes of domestic support policies through direct state intervention as well as indirect support measures. Having reached a stage where agriculture constitutes a very small component of their economy both in terms of their national product as well as the employment potential and also having reached a stage where the trade angle is far more important for their agriculture, they have now prescribed a strict discipline on domestic support which has to be followed by everybody!

Under this regime, the only 'exempt' support measures are those that are for the depressed areas, for research purposes or for environmental considerations. All other domestic support measures will have to be subjected to a quantified discipline. The computation of support will include direct budgetary support as well as indirect support measured in terms of difference between the domestic and international prices of inputs supplied as well as of outputs sold.

Thus, in our case, the most important measure of procurement price will not be an "exempt" measure for the purpose of calculation of such support. Nor will all the input subsidies, such as concessional agricultural credit, fertiliser subsidies, differential tariff on electricity supply, subsidised irrigation facilities.

All these measures will have to be computed together to assess productwise and overall domestic support that is being made available. For developing countries the permissible limit of such support has been fixed at 10 per cent of the value of production, productwise as well as in the aggregate. Only for 'low-income' farmers, input subsidies may be permisible but what constitutes 'low-income' farmers has not been clarified. It is noteworthy that, in our context, it is the relatively better-off farmers who have been largely the beneficiaries of these subsidies and who also have generated large marketable surpluses. It is they who most likely will be the targets of the new international discipline.

It is clear that the new regime will place severe limitations on the autonomous policy-making in the field of agriculture. For the first time in the history of independent India, the vital sector of agriculture will be subjected to an international discipline which has been basically evolved to suit the interests and requirements of industrialised countries and which shows little understanding of the problems and needs of a country like ours where trade considerations are marginal and residuary and where the process of economic development is essentially a function of the development of the agriculture economy.

It is poor consolation to be told that as of now and on the basis of some calculations made (but not published), many of our support regimes will be well within the prescribed limits. Even such claims do not exclude the possibility for our support regimes in regard to sugarcane and oilseed being called in question. More important, the question of desirability of subjecting our agricultural support regime to a long-lasting international discipline cannot be decided on the basis of the accountant's computations at the present juncture.

Equally serious are the implications of the new border regime requiring minimum import access being provided and disallowing the use of non-tariff measures and limiting the use of price-based restrictive measures to the balance of payment considerations. Added to this is the adverse implication of possible extension of patent protection on the use of improved seeds through the DDT discipline on intellectual property protection. The long term implications of the threat to autonomous policy-making in agriculture and, consequentially, to our development policymaking as a whole, are too serious to be assuaged by complacent calculations of the present level of support, by unsubstantiated and vague hopes about increased exports or by private clarifications sought from the GATT bureaucrats about some unclear formulations.

IX: Services

In regard to services, the negotiations do not seem to have proceeded as well from the point of view of the demandeurs. First, as the negotiations unfolded, th main protagonist, namely, the USA he found itself on the defensive in areas like maritime transport where its domestic interests set themselves against any "opening up" to international competition. Strong pressures developed in the USA and Japan to keep financial services as far removed from the general agreement on trade in services as possible by the developing world with a view to retaining a degree of autonomy also worked towards moderating the emergence of a GATT-like agreement in this area. The upshot was that while the agreement as it has now emerged in DDT imposes MFN and transparency obligations on all participants, the choice of sectors and the extent of "opening up" has been left mainly to bilateral negotiations which have not yet been completed.

In this area, our positive interest was to have access in industrialised countries for exports of our skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labour. There is nothing in the text which will ensure this. The fate of this interest will depend on the outcome of the bilateral negotiations. But what is not firmly rooted in the general agreement will be impossible to achieve in bilateral, sector-by-sector negotiations. The prospect of making any significant gains in the area of our positive interest appears to be bleak. On the other hand, we have to accept the MFN obligation which means that the present rule of reciprocity, whether in regard to banks or other financial services, will no longer be available to seek some cross-concessions from our industrialised partners. On top of this, there is the possibility that a powerful industrialised country not satisfied with the extent of "opening up" of our service areas may use that ground to deny us the participation in the new 'GATT plus' that may ultimately emerge.

X: Textiles and the MFA

In the traditional trade areas of textiles, where our positive interestes were the strongest, the upshot is discouraging. What we had sought was an early end of the discriminatory and anti-GATT regime of the MFA. DDT visualises this end only after a period of ten years. It should be remembered that this derogation of GATT has been in existence for two decades, not counting its predecessors in the shape of the short-term and long-term agreements. The competitiveness of the textile industry in the developing world is not questioned by any...

It is difficult for any impartial observer of the scene to argue that the inefficient textile industry in the industrialised world did not have sufficient time to adjust itself to the normal operation of GATT rules in this area. And still, DDT provides another decade for the perpetuation of this atrocity on the GATT system, while making heroic efforts to extend the system to hitherto unaffected and new areas.

What is even more galling is the ingenious scheme of phasing out of the MFA. The journey towards the goal of putting an end to the MFA was supposed to follow a path of progressive liberalisation of current restraints. What has emerged is virtually an eye-wash. DDT provides that 51 per cent of the current restraints will be removed by 2000 AD and the remaining 49 per cent in the three years following that. The fact of the matter is that computation of restraints has been done in such a manner that de facto no extra access needs to be provided either in the USA or in EEC markets in order to achieve this target! In other words, both these entities can claim legitimately to have phased out 51 per cent of restraints by 2000 AD simply by continuing with their present regimes under the MFA and counting in what is already open to access without any restraint, towards the fulfilment of the phase out target of 51 per cent! And as regards the phase-out of the remaining 49 per cent of the restrictions after 2000 AD, only a mixture of naive optimism and ahistorical outlook may encourage one to accept this assurance at its face value.

XI: Concluding the Round at Any Cost?

The apologists of DDT have rested their case mainly on two grounds. DDT is not so bad, they say. More devious and (perhaps, therefore) more effective, however, is their other argument: "Not signing DDT will be worse for us than signing it". A brief examination of the basic features of some important areas of DDT in the preceding paragraphs is enough to establish that DDT is not only bad but dangerous from the national viewpoint. The other argument needs closer scrutiny.

At the root, it is the fear of isolation which provides the rationale of this argument. The isolation syndrome is not a rare phenomenon in international negotiations. Different negotiators have evinced such a fear at different times. Some have used it as an effective lever to influence others. The fear of isolation is conveniently used by those who are willing to make significant concessions to the other side but are afraid of the political fall-out at home. Avoiding isolation is then raised to the status of an objective desirable per se and to be pursued at any cost. The means is thus made to substitute the end; the style, the substance.

When the perception of the national interest is clear and the negotiators are not allowed the luxury of soft options, isolation can be faced with courage and conviction. Our stand in regard to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is a classic example. Unfortunately, in trade negotiations such clarity and courage has not always been discernible.

The protagonists of avoiding isolation at any cost rationalise their belief in terms of the 'absolute' superiority of multilateralism to other modes of international relations in trade and economic matters. But neither the history nor the practice of multilateralism in GATT supports this belief. The genesis of GATT is clearly traceable to the bilateral negotiations between the United Kingdom and the USA, which commenced in the early 1940s while the Second World War was still raging. The scope and content of these negotiations and what ultimately emerged in the shape of GATT was, in essence, a clear product of the bilateral perception of their respective interests. The concept of reciprocity and the use of the technique of bilateral negotiations for tariff reductions bear a clear enough stamp of bilateralism.

The rather loose provision permitting regionalism within multilateralism and even looser interpretation of this provision in the actual functioning of GATT is a testimony to the vast distance between the ideal of multilateralism and the reality of the layers of bilateral and plurilateral trade relationships. It is not an unintended oversight that Article XXIV which has permitted the growth of the most potent regional grouping of the EEC has remained intact throughout the Uruguay Round.

It is somewhat naive to argue that multilateralism will always be to the greater advantage of the weaker partners. What is crucial is the content and practice of the particular multilateral structure and process. If the injustice and arbitrariness of unilateral armtwisting are made an integral part of the multilateral system, the weaker participant will not only receive little protection against such practices but will be even more vulnerable because these practices will acquire a new legitimacy.

DDT does not inspire much hope about the beneficent or protective possibilities of the multilateral framework emerging for the UR negotiations. The Final Act will be an integral document, whether it will take the shape of a Multilateral Trading Organisation (MTO) or GATT II, as the US would like to have it. In both the structures, cross-retaliation will be a legitimate sanction provided by the new international discipline.

The new regimes on intellectual property and agriculture will be placing onerous demands on the economics of developing countries and making deep inroads into their sovereign economic spaces. The labour and labour intensive services will continue to face severe restrictions in the markets of industrialised countries but our markets for capital and technology-intensive services will need to be opened up for foreign suppliers. The "gains" from the textile agreement may prove to be illusory and in the nature of post-dated promises without any enforceable guarantee. Other peripheral or procedural improvements, as in the dispute settlement mechanism, can hardly be an adequate justification for subjecting ourselves to an international treaty which is inherently unequal from our point of view.

If we withhold our signature to DDT, does it follow that it will be the end of multilateral existence for us in trade and economic matters? Even with the emergence of MTO or GATT II, there is no legal possibility for the present GATT to vanish into thin air instantly. For those who do not sign the new Act and for those who do not withdraw from the present GATT, the GATT will continue to exist. And for those who intend to withdraw from it, there is also a cost attached to it, in that they will no longer be entitled to the non-discriminatory treatment in the markets of those who remain within the present GATT.

It is useful for us to remember that "isolating" a continental economy like that of India or China always implies *some* cost for the 'isolators'. It is also relevant to recall that during the forty years of self-imposed "isolation", China had to her credit many significant achievements in various fields ranging from strategic to trade. During this period, we had enjoyed uninterrupted warmth of being part of a multilateral trading system but our achievement in trade, to name but one area, fell far short of the achievement of China.

XII: Possible Future Approaches

Is it possible to evolve some strategy even at this late stage to secure some advantage for us or buy some time in regard to the emerging unequal treaty? The answer possibly lies in insisting on the CONTRACTING PARTIES of GATT to follow the amendment route provided in Article XXX of GATT. Under this Article, amendment to Part-I of GATT, which guarantees non-discriminatory treatment to all contracting parties, can be possible only with unanimous acceptance. Even one single contracting party can hold back the amendment to this part. What is more, any denial of such treatment as a result of other agreements can be questioned as impairment of the basic right. In the past, this route was not adopted while formulating new disciplines like the one on government procurement because of the rather difficult and cautious procedure prescribed in this Article for the process of amendment. This Article also ensures, according to the Vienna Law of Treaties, that amendment to other parts of GATT can be effective only if adopted by a two-thirds majority, binding only those who accept it. This leaves considerable flexibility for parties to respond to newer fields of disciplines that GATT seeks to evolve.

If the developing countries which constitute a clear majority in the contracting parties of GATT choose to exercise their legal right under the existing agreement and insist that the major trading entities follow the route provided in Article XXX, it will, at best, provide them the necessary flexibility in responding to DDT/MTO/GATT II options; at worst, it will buy them time. And time, in such situations, may provide a new slot of opportunity.

Perceptions about the efficacy or appropriateness of a given strategy or tactic may vary. New ones can be thought out. The real question, however, is: Whether there is the will to withstand the unequal treaty? Whether there is the will to draw and defend the Maginot line, come what may? ■

(Concluded)

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Tragedy of Srivardhan

B.C. DUTT

I came upon Srivardhan quite unexpectedly. Yaqub, a friend who had heard that I was looking for a place, less noisy and less polluted than what my place located on Bombay-Goa Highway at 65 kilometres distance from the city had become over the years, said he knew just the place I would like. That is how I landed at Srivardhan.

To my great satisfaction, I noticed, the craze for pernicious industrial development had not reached the sleepy little coastal township as yet. The people were still heavily into nature for making a living. Rice, Nachni, mango, cashew and coconut from the land and fish from the sea provided them with quite satisfactory sustenance. Those who were wedded to consumerism, found their way either to Bombay or beyond, to the Gulf.

Petrol and diesel driven vehicles in the town numbered less than a dozen. The nearest pollution-creating chemical industry, IPCL was at 40 kilometres distance as the crow flew. One could discern the sky kissing the Arabian sea clearly at the horizon and the blue lagoon shimmering under it. There were plenty of open spaces and sandy sea beaches. Mango and coconut orchards, sea breeze and silence created an atmosphere so conducive to a feeling of peace and harmony that I found it hard to return home, that is, to noise and pollution.

People were friendly and helpful. Mosques and temples stood cheek by jowl in tranquillity. I was told Antulay, the former Chief Minister of Maharashtra, whose village, Ambet, was only about 20 kilometres away, never went out campaigning without offering a coconut to the Hari Hareshwar temple.

Not many in Bombay were aware of the goodness of the climate of Srivardhan. The craze for purchasing farm had not brought anyone here from Bombay, perhaps because it lay at five hours driving distance from the city. To my consternation, however, I discovered that the tourism department had reached the area already and had made special arrangements—tent city, etc.—to cater to internal tourists. But this being in low key things have remained, I was told, same as before. This was in June 1992.

Then came the bomb blast that rocked Bombay on March 12 and of all places, sleepy Srivardhan got catapulted into the national scene. The print media went to town. It may even make it to Doordarshan. It is reported that the film-maker, Basu Bhattacharya, has been asked by the Cultural Affairs Minister of the Maharashtra Government to do a film on the bomb blast and he is already shooting at Srivardhan though I did not see him or his unit when I was there.

The author, a former naval rating, participated in the memorable RIN mutiny in 1946 that made a vital contribution to our struggle for freedom.

Bombing of Bombay

It appeared as if every Muslim in the area was connected with what came to be called, bombing of Bombay—directly or indirectly, one way or the other. The police revealed the seedy side of Srivardhan after that. Personally I had received a slight hint of it but could not reconcile to the thought that such apparently peace-loving people could be connected with the pernicious profession like smuggling.

The warning-bell was sounded by someone with whom I had just a nodding acquaintance. I was sitting by the sea, close to the Hari Hareshwar temple watching the sunset through my pocket binocular. This man crept quietly upto me and whispered: "You might attract the attention of the police if any happened to be around." Seeing the puzzled expression on my face the man smiled and just said one word: "Smuggling", and left. The glorious view of the sunset and smuggling! "Darn silly joke," I yelled back at the receding figure. Dismissing the idea as just a joke, I focused the binocular again at the setting sun. But by then it had dipped into the Arabian sea and I had missed its parting posture of the day.

Later speaking to friends, I discovered smuggling, to the locals, is not a great shake. It is almost a way of life with some. This had been going on as long as they could remember. It was almost a part of the culture of the place, particularly with those who owned fishing boats. It was like the case of what was known as abandoned women, in my area, in

Panvel and Pen Talukas of Raigad district where many men opted for another after a few years of marriage to one. No one lost sleep over it. Not even the women's organisations in the city.

Smuggling

In Srivardhan, by and large, people get enough to eat. I never saw a begger. Many go out fishing. It does not need much persuading to get them to carry a few loads from the boats standing out at sea from the Gulf ports; taking the loads in their country crafts through the creeks to the smugglers' dens and get paid sometimes more than their month's income for a few hours' labour. These people are mostly uneducated. The thought that they were indulging in criminal activities and it was harmful to the country's economy did not enter their heads, particularly because they found that preventive services of the government almost always made the smugglers' task easy. So, to their reckoning, where was the harm?

Also they never felt the need to find out what they were being asked to unload from the boats. They had a vague idea that their headloads contained, besides precious metals, electronic goods and textile.

On the other hand, the preventive departments, it appears, were far too ill-equiped to match either fire power and speed of the crafts or the cunning and contacts of the international smuggling mafia. It did not inspire them to risk their necks when they knew that they had little chance of winning. They gained a lot instead, by offering cooperation to the smugglers. Unlike the poor and uneducated villagers, however, men from the preventive departments had little excuse for their attitude.

It seems almost all the policemen from Srivardhan have either been arrested or transferred. Instead of arousing confidence about the serious intention of the administration, I heard many saying: "This is all a big eye-wash". Being aware of their age-old rapport with the smugglers and their agents, people have become cynical, obviously. In any case only time will tell whether they are right or wrong.

After eight months I paid a visit to Srivardhan in the first week of May. The altered atmosphere hit me miles before I reached the town. Now one had to pass through a barrier erected across the highway by the police. But as soon as the policeman heard that we were heading for the Hari Hareshwar temple, he waved us on with a friendly smile without any further question. Hindu friends at Hari Hareshwar assured me it would have been a different story had we been Muslims. They also warned me not visit the Muslim friends or even go to the Muslim localities. According to them, every Muslim was a suspect. Plain clothed men were still around watching the people and their movements—Muslims in particular. This is how the Hindus spoke about their Muslim neighbours. Right or wrong, I had not ever heard this kind of talk in the past.

Communal Virus

One could feel the tension in the air even a month after the last suspect has been rounded up. We learnt from an innocent victim that, high or low, rich or poor, every Muslim connected with fishing had been taken to the police station for questioning and most of them received sound thrashing. This was from a well-to-do Muslim who was taken by the police and, as he put it, "got my quota" and released after 24 hours. He was not into fishing.

The place was still as quiet and the beaches as silent as before but the people no longer appeared the same. Compared to many other parts of the country, Konkan has been free from the communal virus. The administration, like everywhere else, has not been free from corruption and inefficiency. Now with the addition of the communal cancer the deadly triangle of doom appears to be complete.

Last June and July, I almost lived the whole time in Srivardhan. I was most impressed by the friendliness and helpfulness of the people. I never came upon people fighting or even shouting at each other. It was different now. A minor incident at the bank spoke volumes of the change that had come over the people. An old Muslim gentleman requested the cashier of the bank to see if his cheque had come for payment. He was standing behind me. He said he was in a hurry as the time for the Friday *namaz* was nearing. I stepped aside so that he could look at the cAshier's counter, himself. The cashier looked at him fiercely and snapped: "Do you see me sitting idle, doing nothing?" This was not the tone of voice I had ever heard at Srivardhan before! The communities have fallen apart. The events have overtaken their sensitivities. The tragedy is, it is not their doing.

This, I would say, was the greatest achievement of the political parties wedded to communalism. Because this has been their ambition. Seeing what their brand of politics was capable of achieving—beginning with the demolition of Babri Masjid—I am positive they will succeed in fragmenting India, like she was in 1757 when the British found traitors for taking over Suba Bangla from Nawab Shirazudoullah. Because like all enemies of the people and peace, their thinking is warped. They think they can either wish away 110 million people of the country or hold them as second-class citizens.

Unless the sane elements unite against them now, we as a nation are doomed, proving the soundness of Winston Churchill's prophesy: ".... these are men of straw of whom no trace will be found after a few years. They will fight among themselves and India will be lost in political squabbles...."

(Courtesy : *Janata*)

BOOK REVIEW

In Homage to the Maestro

JAG MOHAN

Time with its inexorability marches on. A year and more has passed by since Satyajit Ray died and his mortal coils were freed from wires and tubes of medical equipment at the nursing home, where he had been ailing.

The first death anniversary was observed at a simple, elegant function at Nandan, the West Bengal Film Centre in Calcutta, of which Satyajit Ray was a "godfather". Two films on him made by Shyam Benegal and Bikram Singh were screened. The Chief Minister of West Bengal, Jyoti Basu, and the Information and Broadcasting Minister at the Centre, K.P. Singh Deo, spoke on the occasion.

Special Ray Number of *IFSON* (Indian Film Society News, August 1992) edited by Ajoy K. Dey and Nandan Mitra (Federation of Film Societies of India—Eastern Region, 3 Chittaranjan Avenue, Calcutta 700072; pp. 112; Rs 25).

Film Polemics edited by Sakti Basu and Shuvendu Dasgupta (Cine Club of Calcutta, 2 Jawaharlal Nehru Road, Calcutta 700013; January 1993; pp. 185; Rs 50).

The Indian film industry wracked by scandals of its links with mafia dons and arms smugglers and the suicide of a teenager "star" could not find time for even a token gesture or remembrance to Satyajit Ray!

However, the Director of Max Mueller Bhawan of Delhi, Georg Lecher, a friend and a great admirer of Satyajit, mounted a rare exhibition of photographs of Satyajit taken by Nemai Ghosh over a period of 25 years. These photographs have been brought out in *de luxe* book form by a Belgian publisher.

And, the film society activists of Calcutta have brought out two publications by way of homage to the memory of Satyajit. There is nothing much to say about the design, lay-out and typography about both of them, pretty poor as they are. But the contents of both are extremely valuable for all those who have respect and regard for Satyajit.

Ajoy Dey, formerly a long-time General Secretary of the Federation of Film Societies of India (FFSI), and his colleague, Nandan Mitra, have compiled an anthology of Satyajit's writings which have not been included in Satyajit's book, *Our Films, Their Films.* Aptly enough they have entitled it: *A Tribute to Satayjit Ray: Film in His own Words.*

Ajoy Dey works in the Reserve Bank of India, but he is also a "film activist", if I may call him. His friend works elsewhere. The two of them have culled the articles and texts of lectures from various sources with great effort and out of sincere regard to Satyajit Ray who had been the President of FFSI from its inception till he died—over a period of three decades and more. It is a precious collection, many-sided in range and stimulating to the mind.

In this anthology can be found Satyajit's convocation address to the Film and Television Institute of India, Pune (1974), the longish interview on script-wrinting given to Gaston Roberge of Chitrabani (1970), his "Ordeals of *The Alien*: With Peter-Sellers in Paris and Hollywood" (Satyajit's sad reflections on how and why *The Alien*—feature film in English—project fell through), comments on Godard and Antonioni, his "Thoughts on the Camera" and his comments on *Nayak*, his analysis of "The National Styles on the Cinema" as also his comments on "The New Cinema" and himself, a confessional entitled "If God does really exist" and a few other pieces.

All of them are fresh as if they were written only yesterday, perceptive, original in approach and all in his own impeccable style. It would be extremely worthwhile for the Satyajit Ray Archives to print this booklet in hard cover.

Film Polemics is a fine example of what film society buffs can do by way of service to their fellow-members and film buffs as well. Sakti Basu and Shuvendu Dasgupta have collected the texts of the various controversies from the newspapers of Calcutta and elsewhere—reviews, rejoinders, retorts and so on, which is an essential part of the film scene of Tollywood.

Almost half the book is devoted to Satyajit Ray and his films—*Pather Panchali, Abhijan, Kapurush O Mahapurush, Shataranj Ke Khilari* and *Shakha Prosakha.*

Among these the controversy between Satyajit Ray and the late Rajbans Khanna on the portrayal of Wajid Ali Shah in *Shatranj Ke Khilari* and the other one between Satyajit and his long-time friend and interpreter, Chidananda Das Gupta, on some aspects of *Shakha Prosakha* were sensational when they appeared—the first in *The Illustrated Weekly of* India way back in 1978 and the other in *The Telegraph* in 1991. Now they can be re-read with pleasure, undiminished. Satyajit Ray was a bit too critical of his critics as can be noticed between the lines and otherwise.

The other controversies are on Mrinal Sen's *Akash Kusum* in which Satyajit Ray and Ashish Barman (the script writer for the film) were involved in verbal pugilistics. Mrinal's other film, *Neel Akasher Neechey,* was entangled in controvery since the Government of India suspended its exhibition—all because a Chinese *bikriwallah* of Calcutta was featured in the film. And, in 1966 India and China were embroiled in a war.

Ritwick Ghatak's films were reviewed as a whole by Amiya Kumar Bagchi in the *Frontier* and this provoked Hiren Gohain to send a rejoinder to which Bagchi replied.

These controversies are truly polemics. And Calcutta thrives on such things, whether it is a City of Joy—or of Sorrow. This book is a real delight to read for memories are triggered off, for which thanks are due to the anthologists.

A footnote will be *aposite* here. Both these books have been brought out obviously—without any research grants. That speaks much of the Calcutta culture. ■

Wanted

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Dr. Reddy, Additional Professor of Cardiology in the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, has recently won a prize for the following article. The prize (including a cash award of $1000 besides a citation) was instituted for an international essay competition on the caption of this article. The jury for the competition, held by the 'Economists Allied for Arms Reduction' (ECAAR) based in the US, included seven Nobel Laureate economists, two Nobel Peace Prize winners—Archbishop Desmond Tutu and President Oscar Arias of. Costa Rica—besides the former World Bank Chairman, Robert McNamara, Dr John Kenneth Galbraith, and the Foreign Minister of Indonesia, Ali Alatas. The article is being carried here courtesy the ECAAR which has allowed its publication in Mainstream. —Editor

Arms Reduction and Global Reconstruction: A Blueprint for the Year 2000

K. SRINATH REDDY

> *Give me the money that has been spent in war, and I will clothe every man, woman and child in an attire of which kings and queens will be proud. I will build a school-house in every valley over the whole earth. I will crown every hillside with a place of worship consecrated to the gospel of peace.*
>
> Charles Sumner

The 'opportunity cost' of the human and monetary resources expended in waging war or in maintaining a constant state of pereparedness for technology-intensive modern warfare is the unfulfilled agenda of human development that would have been possible through the alternate use of those resources. The twentieth century has born witness to the marvels of unfettered human creativity and intellect at their best as well as the horrors of war, deprivation and depravity depicting human infirmities at their worst. Even as man has successfully embarked on galactic exploration and visitation of other planets, the future of our own fragile planet hangs in precarious balance due to ecological despoilation. The need to optimally utilise all availabe resources for advancing the global agenda of sustainable and equitable development acquires urgency, as we step onto the threshold of a new millennium. Our future survival depends on our ability to utilise the dwindling years of the dying decade of this disappearing century to forge a global compact that will power such an agenda through resources redeemed from wasteful human conflict.

There are three major factors which are likely to foster global attempts to disengage resources from military expenditure and use them for sustainable human development. Firstly, the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union have eased tensions and dimmed the spectre of an imminent nuclear conflagration. The justification for a large-scale build-up of nuclear and conventional weapons no longer exists in the absence of inimical power blocs. Even the proliferation of regional conflicts as a convulsive aftermath of Soviet disintegration has served to awaken humanity's collective conscience to the brutality of fratricidal conflicts and heighten the desire to end and eschew violence. The climate for peace is, therefore, propitious.

Secondly, economic compulsions of balancing budgets, stimulating growth and investing in human development have become the universal preoccupation of developed and developing countries alike. President Clinton's stirring 'call to arms' for rescuing the American economy rightly identifies a cut in defence spending as a priority. The economic crises that several members of the European Community were confronted with in 1992 will provide an impetus for rescuing and resurrecting their economies through reduced military expenditure. The militarist's argument that investment in defence industries catalyses economic growth is no longer tenable in an altered international scenario where peaceful conflict resolution is the preferred option in a post-Cold War world. The developing countries, in particular, are waging a battle for econmic survival and will readily recognise that investment of their scarce resources for economic growth and human development requires reduced allocations for defence. Economic prowess of nations will be dictated by balance of trade rather than the balance of terror. Focus on economic development will, therefore, encourage the curtailment of expenditure on arms.

Thirdly, the global interdependence brought about by the integration of world markets and national economies as well as the interlinkages provided by the networking of modern communication and information systems will introduce a new ethos where war is regarded as disruptive, wasteful and inefficient. National sovereignties and sensitivities will be subdued by collective economic interests. Sub-regional and regional economic groupings will emerge with global communion through commerce annd technological cooperation. As the Secretary General of the UNCTAD states in his report for 1991:

> Future world economic stability and growth will depend on higher levels of international economic cooperation for the management of interdependence.

Defence spending will become less relevant as a national priority in such an interdependent world.

The peace dividend brought about by arms reduction and the freeing of those resources for national and global reconstruction is the strongest argument by which a blueprint for peace can be advanced for universal adoption. Both the developed and developing countries stand to gain immensely from such a peace dividend, as clearly projected in the Human Development Report 1991 published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This report states that for the industrial countries, a reduction of military spending by two to four per cent a year would translate into savings of $200-300 billion a year by the year 2000 and decadal savings of $2 trillion. It further suggests that these savings could be utilised to deal with the urgent social problems like homelessness, drug addiction, unemployment and inner city development that continue to plague most industrial nations. A large portion of these savings could also be utilised to enhance aid for developmental purposes in the Third World countries. Even if these savings are principally utilised to balance budgetary deficits, it would still protect domestic social spending and international development assistance that may have been the casualties of budget balancing exercises which did not incorporate defence reduction. The developed countries would also do well to utilise a part of these savings to replace ecologically dangerous industrial technology with enviornment-friendly alternatives.

The Human Development Report also highlights the inordinately high levels of defence spending by developing countries. Between 1960 and 1987, it rose from $ 24 billion to $ 173 billion, at a rate three times faster than in the industrial countries. This has resulted in misplaced priorities with many countries of South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa spending two to three times on arms as on education or health. The combined GDP of the developing countries is only 15 per cent of that of the industrial countries. Yet the developing countries buy 75 per cent of the arms traded each year. The report further projects that even if Third World military spending is merely frozen for the next few years, rather than rising annually at 7.5 per cent, this would release $ 10-15 billion each year for human development. This peace dividend could be utilised for essential programmes like universal primary education, health and nutrition, housing, environment-friendly development projects and also for reducing external economic dependence that drives these countries deeper into the debt trap.

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THUS the universal aspiration for economic developent must become the keystone of a progressive arms reduction strategy that effectively diverts valuable resources from defence to development, by the year 2000. The goal of redeploying these freed resources for human development, which is sustainable through measures taken for preservation, protection and promotion of the environment, must be vigorously pursued simultaneously. Poverty is the gretest threat to both human development and the environment. Utilisation of resources liberated by arms reduction for poverty alleviation would be the best guarantee for peaceful and sustainable human development. By fostering the growth of enlightened human communities and democratic processes all over the world, such measures will further accelerate the transition to a peaceful and prosperous global community.

The principal components of a strategy to achieve arms reduction for global reconstruction by 2000 AD will include:

(1) A progressive reduction of defence expenditure by industrial countries by three to five per cent each year.

(2) Investment of at least 25 per cent of these savings in the formation of a Global Reconstruction Fund for providing aid to developing countries to pursue a desirable social agenda for poverty alleviation, human development and ecofriendly industrial growth. Such a fund should be adminstered by the United Nations Development Programme.

(3) Utilisation of the vast savings, which remain after such itnernational aid, for redressal of the social problems that still afflict sizeable sections of industrial societies and to restructure industries by adopting eco-friendly technologies to discard those that threaten and thwart sustainable development.

(4) Progressive nuclear disarmament till complete nuclear disarmament is achieved. The retention of nuclear monopolies by some countries with the prescription of non-proliferation for others will not gain universal acceptance due to its inherently inequitable terms. A Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB) Treaty must become the prelude to complete nuclear disarmament and not remain a ploy to protect the status quo of nuclear hegemony. The process initiated by SALT and START must be pursued to its logical conclusion of global nuclear disarmament. The agencies of the United Nations should monitor the compliance with the provisions of such a phased programme. Violations should attract economic sanctions to be administered by the UN. Disputes could be addressed to the World Court for resolution.

(5) progressive reducation and speedy elimination of the military presence, arms sales and defence assistance through which industrial coutnries provide the impetus and the instruments for Third World militarisation. Military bases in the developing countries must be eliminated. Military aid must be converted into economic aid for supporting sustainable development and a collective embargo should be imposed on shipments of sophisticated arms. Compliance with these provisions would need to be monitored by agencies of the United Nations. Non-compliance with these provisions by supplier nations should attract economic sanctions.

(6) The Third World expenditure on defence should be immediately frozen and then progressively reduced. This may be stimulated and supported by making economic aid conditional on targeted reductions in defence expenditure. International economic aid as well as aid from the UN agencies and the proposed UN administrated Global Reconstruction Fund may be made conditional to reduced defence expenditure. The quantum of annual aid allocation may be linked proportionally to reductions of the defence expenditure to the GNP ratio as reflected inthe annual national budget and increased investment in programmes of sustainable human development. This performance-based aid incentive could be monitored by the UNDP which has developed measures like the Human Development Index for evaluating the level of sustainable human development in each country. a linkage of economic aid to human rights, as presently proposed by industrial countries, is likely to be viewed as arbitrary, judgmental and biased by the developing countries who are resentful of the double standards that developed countries have often applied in the past on this issue. However, the protection accorded to the rights of women and children must be incorporated into the developmental performance indices that are formulated as aid eligibility criteria.

(7) New methods of peaceful conflict resolution need to be developed. Fora for regional cooperation may serve for mutlialteral adjudication or even monitoring of the peaceful manner in which bilateral disputes of member-states are being settled. The United Nations and its apparatus must be strengthened so that it has the mandate and the resources to monitor and intercede in troubled areas. Armed conflict should be prevented and peaceful solutions sought and secured. The penalty of economic sanctions must be applied by the UN to member-states who seek recourse to armed aggression.

(8) Global goals for sustainable development must be identified through a consultative process which recognises the legitimate aspirations of the developing countries as well as the valid concerns of environmentalists. This social and environmental agenda for human development must target universal primary education and primary health care, safe drinking water for all, elimination of serious malnutrition and reversing the process of deforestation as goals for the year 2000. Regional time-frames for the other components of sustainable development also may be set on the basis of global consensus.

(9) The global consultative process must be strengthened. Equitable partnerships in an interdependent world require continued dialogue and discussion between nations. The UN must become a forum for charting out the course of sustainable human development and progressive arms reduction through involvement of all member-states. Developing countries must be represented in disarmament talks and the development of a new framework for world peace. Only through such a global compact will the goal of demilitarisation for development become universally accepted and honoured.

The key issue on which the success of this framework hinges is the willingness of industrial coutnries to disinvest in defence and prioritise domestic and international human development as a cherished goal. The impact of domestic economic performance and the satisfaction level of the citizens on issues related to human development on the electoral prospects of political leaders has been amply illustrated by the recent US Presidential election. Leaders of industrial nations will do well to pay heed to this message and divert funds from wasteful defence expenditure to deficit reduction and development.

In the new world order, economic health rather than military might will provide the major source of strength to nations. As Nobel Laureate T.W. Schultz aptly remarked, "the wealth of nations has come to be predominantly the acquired abilities of people—their education, experience, skills and health". The economic compulsions of survival and sustainable development in an interdependent world will provide the impulse for global arms reduction. The Biblical injuction of converting swords into plough shares will need to be heeded by nations, even if modern monetary markets may view the alternative in terms of shares instead of plough shares.What is required is the enlightened vision of a shared global future and the will to pursue it with vigour and commitment. We must now choose whether we will use our resources to raze humanity or to raise humanity. ■

West Bengal Panchayat Poll and the Chinese Visit

ANAND MATHEW

The results of the recently concluded Panchayat elections in West Bengal have once again proved that the State is the stronghold of the Left Front led by the CPI-M. There were altogether 2,20,105 candidates standing for the 71,119 seats for all the three tiers—the Gram Panchayats, Panchayat Samitis and Zilla Parishads. Out of this, 64,325 were women contesting the 23,707 seats reserved for them. According to the latest tally available in the Gram Panchayats of the 61,016 seats, the Left Front got 38,769, the Congress 16,139 and the BJP secured 2340 seats. In the Panchyat Samitis of the 9453 seats the Left Front got 5674 seats, the Congress 1810 and the BJP 113. The BJP drew a blank in the Zilla Parishads where of the 656 seats the Left Front got 411 seats. and the Congress secured 46. Through this fourth election to the Panchayats since 1978, West Bengal has shown the way to other States as to what democracy at the grassroots level could achieve. It may be recalled here that the State's commitment to Panchayati Raj got the necessary dynamism from the leadership of Jyoti Basu who is the longest serving Chief Minister in the country for the last 16 years.

I had an opportunity to visit the West Bengal countryside in the company of a six-member Chinese delegation that had specially come to study the electioneering for the Panchyats and witness the actual polling. China's interest in basic level democracy is well known. The team had in it the Chief of the Rural Division, Department of Basic Level Government, two senior officials of the Ministry of Civil Affairs and two Division Chiefs from the Sichuan and Jiangsu provinces. They visited Burdwan and Midnapore districts. Their itinerary included visits to villages, the Block Development offices, village houses and camps where the election arrangements were being made.

The villages we visited wore a festive look with a large number of posters of various political parties. There was propaganda blaring from mikes fitted in every vantage point available. It was interesting to see groups taking out marches through the village alleys. Several of them were led by women who would be raising slogans of their parties in support of their candidates. We used to ask the villagers about the important issues in the poll. They interacted with us freely in spite of the presence of foreigners. The women candidates regardless of their party affiliations were forthcoming in their views on the various issues that affected their village life. They were appreciative of the various measures like provision of drinking water through handpumps, construction of metalled roads and bio-gas plants. They were very forceful in their criticisms of the omissions by their respective Panchayats.

One afternoon we went to Santiniketan and Visva-Bharati. Our Chinese friends were thrilled to see a flourishing centre of learning in the rural set-up founded by Rabindranath Tagore who was a great friend of China. They were overjoyed to see a thriving Chinese Centre at Visva-Bharati. While coming out of the university we were greeted by a huge election rally with flags and banners. We were told that they were *karamcharis* (workers) of Visva-Bharati taking out a procession to neighbouring villages for the Panchayat polls. For the Chinese delegation it was a rare occasion to get a glimpse of electioneering in India.

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BEFORE the polls on May 30 the Chinese delegation was received by the government officials, party leaders and other important people. The most memorable meeting they had was with Jyoti Basu who gave them a graphic picture of the arrangements made for the poll and other details. The Chief Minister spent over an hour answering their various queries. The West Bengal officials were open in the meetings held with the visiting team.

On the election day the delegation visited several booths in the North 24-Parganas and South 24-Pargana districts where they saw the actual voting take place.

At the end of the visit the Chinese team was impressed by several aspects of the West Bengal Panchayat elections. The most interesting aspect was when they found in a tradition-bound country like India, women playing a significant role in defining the future of their villages. Their participation in rallies, public meetings and above all, the heavy turnout in the polling was something which left the deepest impress on the Chinese team. They used to ask the women and the women candidates a large number of questions whenever possible and listened attentively to their answers. The Chinese were of the view that the land reforms initiated by the Left Front Government was very effective in improving the lot of the village poor. Another area of interest was the multi-party contest that they witnessed in the village polls. It took some time for them to understand it as they are used to a single-party system in China.

They were indeed all praise for the smooth conduct of the elections and the orderly manner in which the people participated in it. For them the election procedure was too complex but they admired the tradition of democratic elections which make it possible to hold such elections in one day for about 30 million voters.

Before bidding farewell, I asked Zhang Shifeng, Staff Member, Rural Division, Department of Basic Level Government, with whom I spent most of the time, what in his view was the negative aspect of the elections. He said it was the violence and the killings that happened following the polling day and the counting. That indeed was a black mark and a fearful trend for us, the younger generation, who look upon Indian democracy with great hopes as an instrument capable of ensuring social progress. ■

The author is a student of St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi.

Are "Secularists" helping the Hindutva Cause?

PRADEEP KUMAR

The title of this essay may sound paradoxical but to my mind it is more relevant today than any discussion on the rising trend in Hindu militancy. Let me begin by answering this question with a big YES. I have deliberately put the word "secularists" within quotation marks as by this word I mean a particular brand or "species" of secularists who claim to uphold the banner of secularism in India. I do not call them "pseudo-secularists" in the BJP's terminology. This is because the BJP's reference group may be much larger and may in fact include a very large number of secularists who don't fit into their scheme of things. I would pefer to include in my category of "secularists", those hard core activists who are carrying out a visibly militant (in terms of their vocabulary, of course) fight against what they call communalism of the *Hindutva* variety. This fight is largely carried out in the print and visual media and is wholly sustained by it.

I may sound prejudiced in my language, but then I obviously do not mean that all those who are included in this category are necessarily "pseudos". To clarify my position, I would say there are broadly two types of people in this category: *One*, those who deliberately maintain a high profile and use these "secular" forums to advance their own personal interests by way of projection in the media and their association with high-ups; and *two*, those who may be genuinely worried about the rising trend in *Hindutva* but may have joined this group in view of lack of an alternative forum to work for the cause, so dear to them. My response in this write-up is directed against both, but certainly more at the second category of people, as the first category, to my mind, does not simply listen to any viewpoint contrary to theirs.

My first serious objection to any such group, as "secularists", or "feminists", is: should an ideology necessarily "blind" a person to criticism to the extent that all that comes from the "other side" is to be simply dismissed or contradicted, either with plain disdain or with the help of sophistry and statistical and academic jugglery? I am extremely sorry for using these words in my rejoinder to these friends, but then plain words do at times make one's job easier than sophisticated terminology. It is true that the BJP-wallahs have very little secular credentials (whatever we might mean by the word secular) to attack others' secularism by dubbing it as "pseudo-", but then, is it enough to leave their queries unanswered? Even when attempts have been made to answer them on a point-to-point basis (as in the case of temple demolitions in J & K), the rejoinders have been utterly one-sided. Most articles that appeared in newspapers read like a defence lawyer's statement denying each and everything that the opponent had said.

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In the by now notorious Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy, the secularists' side of the story was told in as absurd and one-sided a fashion, as the *Hindutva*-wallahs'. And this is when both sides had engaged well-reputed high-profile professional historians. The argument-counterargument sessions which were carried out in the print and visual media for a fairly long time (and have mercifully toned down these days), looked like an interesting court-scene in a juridical film. Neither of the sides was prepared to believe that there could be an iota of truth in the "opponent's" argument. What was the result? A marathon session of rejoinders and counter-rejoinders, allegations and counter-allegations, till the language became somewhat abusive.

What use is this kind of secularists' fight? Is it any better than the "communalists' " way of going about their own ideology? Both talk these days in terms of "we" and "they", without bothering to make any effort to judge the issue on its own merits. Every time the "Hindu-historians" dug out a "fresh" evidence in Ayodhya, I could guess the "secular" historians' response almost cent-per-cent. What else is the literal meaning of the word "pre-judice" in English?

I have rather prolonged this particular case, but then it is just one of the several cases where I find myself distanced from the secularists' forums, even when my friends who see me condemn some of the blatantly communal outbursts of the BJP, consider me to be their "natural ally". They often ask me to take position, this *or* that side of the line. But where is this line, I don't know.

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MORE than what I have already said, what worries me is that the "fight" against communalism is invariably confined to the fight against the BJP, and that too is usually carried out in a mock fashion, say by condemning it ten times a day at ten different places, or by using extremely rhetorical style. I think the BJP will feel flattered if it knows that it solely monopolises that monster called "communalism".

Most judgements of the secularists on the BJP's doings (and undoings) read like the Congress pronouncements on the RSS/BJP combine. Does it do any good to the secularists' cause? It rather makes the BJP bolder by turning itself into the "defender" of the (Hindu) faith. The *Hindutva* brigade's work becomes much easier. It finds it much more convenient to paint all the BJP opponents as the "enemies" of the Hindus. No serious battle is carried out by way of any campaign or political rallies. The latter remain confined to the media which gives them a larger than life image, thereby reducing them unconsciously into the government propaganda.

Of late some Leftist intellectuals (many of them well-meaning persons) have taken to propagating Vivekananda's Vedanta philosophy to make up for the "lapse" on their part to appeal to the clientele which has inflated the BJP's support base in recent years. While these intellectuals of the CPI/CPM may be very honourable and genuine persons, their sudden love for "true Vedantic Hinduism" has not been able to find many takers. This is very natural. If I am religious enough to subscribe to the Hindu philosophy of any school, do I have to turn my ears to hitherto irreligious leaders of the Communist Parties, to learn my lessons in Hinduism? The answer should have been known to the party leaders, if they had any understanding of a religious mind. I don't think one has to go against one's own long-cherished values (in this case atheism) to pander to the requirements of the "neo-Hindus".

All that the parties should have done in this case was to "expose" the "extra-religious" motives of these communal leaders. The people could have simply been told that even if it was true that the Muslims had destroyed their temples, nothing should be done now to take "revenge" on an incident that should be buried in the debris of such feudal invasions. In the first place the very approach to go into the minutest details of the Mandir-Masjid controversy was erroneous, as the real factor involved was not merely a law suit but the "pride" of the two communities. This had in fact very little to do with either of the two religions. The cultural and political assertions of the two communities are certainly not a matter of *Shastrartha* (religious discourse) or that to be settled in a law court. And this the Communists know too well.

Instead what our secularists did was that they outrightly rejected every argument that was put forward to prove that the Hindu temples were destroyed in the medieval times, every time taking pains to convince the people that most Muslim rulers of medieval India had been more tolerant than the Brahminical Hinduism which had destroyed the Buddhist shrines. This is falling into your adversary's trap. I still believe that the people could be convinced on these matters. The problem arises when they treat these secularists as their adversaries, largely due to their pronouncements in the press which obviously are heavily "sympathetic" to Muslim communalism while being extremely severe towards the assertions of *Hindutva*. The moment the secularists are seen (even if it is unintended) as champions of the Muslim cause, the battle against secularism is lost.

Remember it, secularism is much more, and I repeat much more, than BJP-bashing. It is a genuine, intellectual's approach to transcend one's religious and anti-religious consciousness. And if only this attempt is absolutely honest, can a secularist come close to the masses to know their pulse. And it is these masses who alone should be the target of any movement, and not the political parties of this or that variety. While the secularists are directing their tirades against the "communal" parties, the BJP is directly addressing itself to the masses, every time appealing to "them" and not to their adversaries in the political parties.

The only party which still talks of "secularism" and still has a large following, is the Congress. Not that one believes in its secular credentials anymore but then it always had the tremendous heterogeneity to deny its total identification with any particular religious group. Unfortunately, it has also forgotten its own tradition of "absorbing" movements without alienating them by frontally attacking them. The secularists in the Congress, while being far more sectarian in outlook than most communalists, have also started speaking in the militant language (*a la* the *kar sevaks*).

Militancy, it seems, has been permeating every group, moving from the Islamic fundamentalists to the *Hindutva* brigade to the secularists. "Confrontation" and "frontal attack" are bad words, not because they are harsh or impolite, but because they smack of arrogance, lack of sensitivity to other's viewpoint, and consequently are extremely counterproductive when used against a party's propaganda that has (rightly or wrongly) found buyers. The spirit should be to "convert and absorb" these by sustained political work devoid of mock fights which don't go beyond the small screen or the newsprint. ■

The Selling of the PM

MODHUMITA MOJUMDAR

L'etat c'est moi. Words to the same effect are emanating from the lips of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, ever since the scamster, Harshad Mehta, alleged that he had paid a crore of rupees to the present Prime Minister. Had this kind of an allegation been made at the time of Nehru by a known crook, nobody would have believed him. However, Nehru would have had no qualms about clearing his position before the JPC, inquiring into the scandal, on his own. The selling of the PM and her coterie began in real earnest during the so-called internal Emergency declared by Indira Gandhi. Now, again it has assumed diabolical proportions—but with as little power to influence the people. Today again, the state-owned and government-controlled electronic media and newspapers loyal to the Congress-I are working overtime to remove the egg from the PM's face while Narasimha Rao says that he will appear before the JPC if summoned (indeed, he would have no other option in that event), but that he would not volunteer to appear before the Joint Parliamentary Committee looking into the most gigantic financial fraud since independence in which his name has been dragged in.

Narasimha Rao has given a clear chit not only to himself but also to the members of his entourage. His appointment diary for the relevant date has been released to the Press. But this very page of the diary raises more questions than it answers. For, the appointments with the PM that day have many chronological gaps. So, what is the basis of his saying that he has emerged from the fire ordeal like *Sita Mata*—unscathed? Nobody has exonerated him of the charge made against him by Harshad Mehta. The only thing he told the truck-loads of people brought to his house by his supporters from the outskirts of Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, was to forget the episode. He himself, he said, had already forgotten the charge! Are these the words of an honest and upright Prime Minister answerable for his actions to the people of the country? In case he insists on comparing himself to Sita, he ought to ask the earth to split and find a place for himself in her bosom, for apart from employing questionable tactics, he has come out with nothing tangible to exonerate himself. Indeed, All India Radio and Doordarshan have been working overtime to tell their audiences and viewers that Narasimha Rao has a spotless character. Doordarshan even produced a programme on the views (obviously doctored) of common people saying that Narasimha Rao, the *malik* of the country, could possibly not have taken a paltry one crore rupees by way of bribe. (The Doordarshan teams forgot to ask the interviewees what they would consider a respectable bribe for the *malik* of the nation).

Narasimha Rao's visit to Andhra was similarly publicised as was his recent trips to UP and MP. At every place he pooh-poohed the idea of either himself or anybody close to him having taken the bribe from Harshad Mehta. Honesty, of course, would have demanded that he instituted a high-level inquiry into the activities of his lieutenants on that relevant date and time when Harshad Mehta claims to have doled out the bribe. Instead, he goes about saying that the enemies of the nation have put forward this charge which does not damage his personal image but the image of the country! The charge against him, is supposed to have ruined the prospects of foreign investment in India which his Finance Minister was trying to obtain with a wholesale liberalisation of the nation's economic policies!

In his recent marathon effort to sell himself, Narasimha Rao has been boasting of how the nation is being unified and dissidence wiped away after only two years of his coming to power. Significantly, he has not even pleaded that there was an element of miscalculation on his part when the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya was demolished or when Bombay was rent asunder with bomb blasts of a most sophisticated kind. Is this the kind of peace and national integration that the Narasimha Rao Government proposes to bestow on the country? Pakistan is, of course, being blamed, and perhaps rightly, for not handing over the Memon brothers to India for investigation and trial. But it is amazing that these notorious criminals could flee India in spite of our strict checks at international airports. Has any inquiry been set up as to how the notorious Memon brothers fled from India? Surely, it is not any rational Indian's view that all our multifarious problems emanate from the mysterious "foreign hand". With all this, what appears is that Narasimha Rao is desperately being sold as Cleaner than Mr Clean. However, whether the people of the country will be taken in by such gimmicks remains to be seen.

Recently, over DD, Narasimha Rao was shown as saying that when he was the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, there were many complaints against him. On the top of the list was that he hobnobbed with *sadhus*. The way Narasimha Rao presented, this fact seemed to do credit to him. However, we all know the nexus between the so-called *sadhus* and holy men and politically powerful persons. This is precisely why Chandraswami was able to hold a *yagna* at the disputed site in Ayodhya recently. Indeed, his mother's funerary rites were performed with great fanfare somewhere in Rajasthan recently. A close relative of P.V. Narasimha Rao was present on the occasion.

Narasimha Rao has promised that the construction of both the temple and the mosque at Ayodhya will be left to religious leaders and politicians will have no say in the matter. But given the close connections that religious leaders of all hues have with politicians of all colours, one wonders where the fine line of distinction can be drawn. What is particularly disturbing is that fact that neither godmen nor politicians in this country seem to have any aesthetic awareness whatsoever. So, instead of the ancient and beautiful Babri Masjid we are in to suffer seeing the construction of two hideous and expensive monstrosities in Ayodhya, with Narasimha Rao gloating over his achievement and offering his prayers at both the shrines which will be glossy, marble-floored and sufficiently hideous to suit the tastes of all godmen of 'religion' and all politicians. After all, like our politicians of today our priests and *mullas* too consider themselves as know-alls and I doubt if a reputed architect will be consulted before building the twin edifices. ■

RAJNI KOTHARI : Left Consolidation

(Continued from page 5)

was that they depended so much on the Jana Sangh and the BJP. Now that it has itself parted company with the rest of the Opposition the ground may become clear for the latter. Indeed, looking ahead, the future of democratic politics in India lies with neither the Congress nor the BJP. It lies with the Left and Left-of-Centre coalition of forces. They key question is how long it is going to take for such a coalition to get institutionalised. It need not take long.

It is already clear that in the overall scenario of the politics of despair and desperation it is the Left that should present an image of statesmanship, pragmatism and a non-doctrinaire, yet principled, approach to politics. This is in some ways a new development, to no small extent a result of Jyoti Basu's remarkable grip over things. It is time V.P. Singh, Mulayam Singh Yadav and others thought of making the Left a midwife of the Left-of-Centre political process. History demands fresh thinking and the need to move forward.

Once the new Left and Left-of-Centre consolidation takes root and establishes itself as the ideological heir of the erstwhile Congress, it should not be difficult for committed Congressmen to make up their mind on who to cast their lot with. Arjun Singh's last-ditch effort to revive the Congress organisation and reform it is already too late. Quite apart from the pathological stagnation of the party and its deep corruption and criminalisation, it has lost out systematically in its traditional strongholds—the poor, the minorities, the *dalits*, the tribal hinterlands. The Muslims do not trust it any more. Its revival in Punjab does not indicate its winning over the Sikhs. The middle peasantry and the urban tertiary class (including the industrial proletariat) have decidedly turned against it.

In terms of the electoral geography of the country, UP, MP, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan on the one hand, and Bihar, Orissa, Tripura and West Bengal on the other have already been lost to the Congress. It is likely to lose in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka too. Tamil Nadu is already out of its grip and Gujarat is emerging as the fort of the BJP. The by-elections showed that the National Front and the Left did better than either the Congress or the BJP. It seems that Congressmen have to choose between one of three courses : sink with the PM, join the BJP, or go forward for what is natural for a committed Congressman, namely, join the emerging secular alliance.

The coming months will present a moment of choice for both politician and the public: to continue to stick with the democratic pluralist path or lose balance and slilp into neo-fascist adventurism. Present evidence suggests that the Indian people (after the first hypnosis of the *mandir*) are not that keen on becoming part of a *Hindu Rashtra*. While the Congress seems desperate to keep holding on to power at the Centre—it may be tempted not to seek a fresh mandate and even suspend the political process—the BJP will be desperate to make it right away for if it loses now, it will never make it. This may make the *Sangh Parivar* take once more to the street. ■

(Courtesy : *The Times of India*)

S.K. SINGH : Pakistan

(Continued from page 6)

The Western Ambassadors in Islamabad had taken the precaution of agreeing amongst themselves that they would not misunderstand if the Army decided to bring certain unruly politicians to order. It was a pity that premature and exaggerated media attention forced these Western envoys to disavow all this.

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AFTER Zia's death, and after the Americans and Russians became indifferent to Afghanistan, Pakistan had felt jilted by the USA. Despite this Pakistani leaders went on wooing Washington diligently and persistently. Indeed, between Benazir and Nawaz there was competition as to which of them was more highly regarded in Washington DC.

Aid to Pakistan was stopped due to the Pressler Amendment. The US put pressure on them to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and generally to behave better in nuclear matters. The Americans started showing their peeve about not getting access to Kahuta when obviously the Chinese had such access. They advised Pakistan to go slow in the matter of aiding and abetting terrorism in the Punjab and Kashmir States of India. They were angered, but not too angered, due to China supplying Pakistan missile-related technology and hardware. Pakistan was warned that unless it mends its ways it could be kept on the US' watch list of States supporting terrorism. In recent weeks the State Department (perhaps also the NSC) seems to have accepted Pentagon's advice, and that of the CIA, that pressures on Pakistan need to be relaxed. Their line of reasoning is that Pakistan has been a traditional friend of the USA; is an important country in this part of the world; strategically situated; and friendly with Saudi and other pro-USA Gulf regimes.

The US has, therefore, announced that Pakistan will no longer be on their terrorism watch list. The two-year period of missile technology related sanctions having expired vis-a-vis Pakistan, it is not being renewed or extended. American spokesmen have been complimenting the persuasive advocacy on behalf of Pakistan in Washington, by its two articulate lady visitors—Benazir Bhutto and the former Ambassador, Abida Hussain.

We must not be mesmerised by this sudden change of guard in Pakistan. We must note that the Western powers ensured that they should be well-placed, at this juncture, to exercise influence and build up a pliant of a new pro-Western leadership there. In case Wasim Sajjad contests the Presidential election in December, he should be able as a Punjabi to defeat General Aslam Beg who wishes to contest this election and is not a particular friend of the West. He was supportive of Saddam Hussein during the Kuwait-Iraq crisis and war. Aslam Beg is a Mohajir, hailing originally from the Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh.

As between Benazir and Nawaz the West should be equally pleased whichever of them comes up. They will both be pliable. A thorough internal review of Pakistan's economic situation by an economist of Qureishi's eminence and pragmatic sense is bound to be helpful to the West. He could even try and persuade the Army that the present budgetary allocations for defence are not a practical proposition.

As regards Pakistan's policy vis-a-vis India until after the elections, there can be little improvement. Even afterwards it is going to be doubtful. Ms Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif can claim that they were not kept fully informed about the country's developments in the nuclear field. However, both of them, while in office, have handled the IB-ISI-Ranger mischief promoting terrorism in India, specially in Punjab and in J&K. The Army too will continue to find India as a convenient pretext for ensuring that the Army gets butter and jam alongwith glory.

Between now and the elections in October 1993 we in India must keenly watch out for changes, if any, in the internal perceptions in Pakistan. Is Pakistan going to be able to reject the Zia Amendment (the Eighth) to the Bhutto Consititution (of 1973)? How will an assertive judiciary (both the Supreme Court and the four High Courts) get out of the trap represented by the authority of the Federal Shariat Court? Is the country ready to move on to moderninising Islam? Or are they content to remain confused in a dim twilight phase of wanting at one and the same time both a democratic, vibrant, modern polity and a seventh century traditional, rigid, mullah-oriented Islam? Has the country noticed during the months of vicious infighting between Ishaq Khan and Nawaz, how easy it is for a provincial Subedar like Wattoo to raise the banner of revolt against the Sultanate in Islamabad and get away with it? In other words, how does the country wish to manage the problems of devolution in a federal society? ■

(Courtesy: *The Hindustan Times*)

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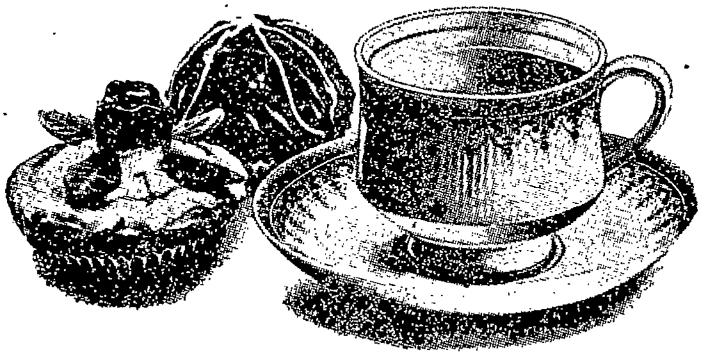

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Nehru Model & Left • *Remembering Harold Laski*

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EDITORIAL

Aya Ram comes to Parliament

The Prime Minister has survived the no-trust motion on the floor of the Lok Sabha But the government over which he presides has failed to win the confidence of the Lower House.

That indeed is the reality. Seven members of the 20 member Ajit Singh group of the Janata Dal defied the party whip and voted against the motion with the Congress members. They were duty-bound to vote for the motion as per the decision of the JD-A leadership. If they had done so, as they were expected to do (but did not owing to alleged largescale pay-offs), the total strength of those in favour of the motion would have been 258. The total strength of those opposing the motion in that case would have also reached the figure of 258 (granted that the four-member Shibu Soren group of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha voted against the motion; although they did not secure any verbal assurance from the PM on a separate Jharkhand State here too there was reportedly substantial transfer of money to influence the outcome of the voting). In no case then could the ruling party have secured a majority without the blatant use of money power.

The Narasimha Rao Government has thus made some sort of record in the annals of parliamentary politics.

A government which is bereft of majority support in the Lok Sabha, has survived three no-confidence motions in the course of two years. What is ominous is that every time support for it has been going down touching the narrow margin of only 14 in a House with its present strength of 518.

More serious is the fact that this time this cliff-hanging majority was secured by the Treasury Benches not by an intense debate on issues of political import, but by blatantly engineering defections from one of the groups in the Opposition. In this operation reports are current of substantial sums of money having passed hands.

Twentyfive years ago, the sobriquets of Aya Ram and Gaya Ram gained official currency with reference to members in the Haryana legislature changing sides in consideration of monetary allurements It appears that the Aya Ram culture has now arrived in the precincts of the Parliament of the Indian Republic. making a mockery of the Anti-Defection law as also the very essence of our parliamentary democracy. This time too Haryana has given a lead in the form of the irrepressible Bhajan Lal. It s ghastly to find that the organisation parading itself as the only 'national' party in the country should have indulged in this game to hang on to power.

The three-day Lok Sabha debate on the no-confidence motion brought out the bankruptcy of the government side. The main thrust of the Opposition attack was the denunciation of the government's economic policy as a sell-out of the country's interests and assault on its self-respect. Alongwith it, the common theme of all the interventions from the Opposition was the prevalence of large-scale corruption in public life (though one expected the speakers from the Left to come out more emphatically on this score). In fact, the provocation for the no-trust motion was the allegation of bribe-taking by the Prime Minister, which the official side could not refute effectively and convincingly, while there continues a studied reluctance to take recourse to legal remedy to vindicate the Prime Minister's position.

What has been amazing is that there was no rebuttal at all of this allegation from the Treasury Benches. The Prime Minister himself totally evaded the issue to the utter surprise of all sections of the House. This deafening silence on the part of the Congress benches on the issue of corruption in high places itself fits in with the reports of big money having been passed to somehow manage a majority in the Lok Sabha so that the government could survive. Law Minister Bharadwaj's outbursts will certainly strengthen public suspicion about rampant corruption in the upper echelons of the Congress party.

The government may have survived the no-confidence motion by resorting to dubious means, but this by no means rescues it out of the crisis. In the weeks ahead, it will have to face the blizzard that is bound to come up over the Bofors exposure, then the mega scandal of the disinvestment of the public-sector units, and finally the long-awaited JPC report on the securities scam. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister himself may have to face the embarrassment of the exposure of the involvement of one of his sons in the Goldstar scandal. And one is yet to hear the last of the Harshad Mehta charges.

Add to this, the inner squabbles of the Congress party. Where then is the guarantee for the survival of the Narasimha Rao Government in the days ahead?

July 29

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Ghost of Bofors Haunts Congress

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

To expect the Congress-I to pin down the bribe-takers in the Bofors gun deal and punish the guilty is unrealistic, to say the least.

It is now more than six years that the Bofors scandal has been part of our political vocabulary, and despite all the high-tension excitement over it and the protracted negotiations for identifying the culprits, it has been clear throughout that the ruling party at the time, particularly the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and his immediate entourage dragged their feet throughout. One got the impression that the ruling establishment at the time was more interested in covering up the deal than unearthing its sordid aspects. Throughout those turbulent days, the Rajiv establishment was prepared to lose its strength than get at the truth.

V.P. Singh, for instance, was a close lieutenant of Rajiv Gandhi, holding the key portfolio of Finance. The points of friction between him and his Prime Minister were more than one, but the decisive one was about conducting a thorough investigation into the Bofors scandal. Not only V.P. Singh, another close colleague and trusted friend, Arun Singh, made it clear that he could not tell the truth about the Bofors deal without hurting his friend, and so he chose to quit the government and left politics altogether. The then Chief of the Army Staff has, in his subsequent interviews, made it obvious that there was hanky-panky at the highest level in the gun deal.

One has only to recall how the farce of a Joint Parliamentary Committee was set up at the time with all sorts of constrictions which the Congress party by sheer force of majority could manage to put in—terms which made a mockery of any investigation. And to cap it all, that JPC was presided over by B. Shankaranand who had already earned a deserving reputation for reckless involvement in corruption. No wonder the Opposition parties boycotted that phoney JPC which promptly cleared Rajiv Gandhi and his cronies of corruption charges, but carried no conviction whatsoever with the public about the authenticity of its findings. Meanwhile, the CBI at every stage was found to be blocking a proper investigation, an exercise in which its then chief, Mohan Katre, brought down not only his own reputation but that of the agency as well.

All this, it may be recalled, led to a first-class political crisis for the government. If one thing contributed more than anything else to the defeat of the Congress in the 1989 general election, it was undoubtedly the Bofors kickback deal. The complaint of the Congress bosses has been that though nothing definite was proved about Rajiv's involvement in the kickback deal, the Opposition, particularly V.P. Singh and his cohorts, spread the slander against him and then through such a campaign of falsehood, the Congress under Rajiv lost the majority in Parliament.

While intrepid media investigators, particularly Chitra Subramaniam, stuck on to the probe, the Congress propaganda tried to spread the impression that although somebody might have got the bribe for the Bofors deal, Rajiv and his circle were maliciously implicated in it. The Congress bosses have since then sought to turn his tragic assassination into a sort of political canonisation as they have come to calculate that this would be good investment for the election season. The miscalculation in this assessment lies in the fact that while Rajiv's cruel destiny evokes sympathy all round, this by itself can hardly be expected to last for long. Besides, more important is the fact that the very mention of the Bofors brings back the sordid memory of the kickback and this could never possibly be an asset for the political leaders whose names are associated with the deal.

A charge is often made that V.P. Singh after making the tall claim that he would brand the culprits within a fortnight of his taking over the government, could do nothing of the sort. Obviously, it was a case of infantile irresponsibility on the part of any leader to have made such a fatuous promise, as it was known how complicated and difficult it is to track down international wheeler-dealers handling *sub rosa* kickbacks through the confidentiality of the Swiss channels. What the Janata Dal Government did was somehow to keep up the probe, despite the barrackings by our own CBI. The fact that the V.P. Singh Government from the very beginning gave the impression of having a precarious tenure led to the investigating agencies like the CBI being more sluggish, if not obstructionist, in conducting the probe. Finally, the Janata Dal Government by its very nature was found to be incapable of being tenacious in its performance on any major issue facing it.

When Narasimha Rao became the Prime Minister, one could perceive a feeling of relief among his partymen who were keen on hushing up the probe. It needs, however, to be mentioned as a plus point in favour of the Narasimha Rao Government that it kept up the investigation, though at the same time it let those opposed to it, to have a free hand as could be seen in the extraordinary case of Narasimha Rao's Foreign Minister, Madhavsinh Solanki, passing on a mysterious letter to a Swiss authority recommending the virtual stoppage of the probe, which, when caught, cost him his Cabinet post.

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IT is in this background that the disclosure has now come from Switzerland that as many as seven parties were trying to block the disclosure of the names of those who received kickback money from the Bofors. These include the three worthy Hinduja brothers, Srichand, Gopichand and Prakash, together with the inevitable Win Chadha and the familiar figure of Ottavio Quattrocchi, and two *benami* companies—the Sevenska serving Win Chadha and the Jubilee Finance, the Hindujas.

Let it be clearly understood that this is only the tip of the iceberg. These seven parties were only trying for three long years to block the publication of the names who had taken the bribe. And now that they have failed in their attempt, the names of the actual bribe-takers are likely to be available to the CBI in the near future provided the necessary formalities are adhered to. Judging by the record of the CBI which incidentally tried to prevent the disclosure of these seven names, one has to keep one's fingers crossed about what ultimately would come out.

And who are these characters who are so anxious that the Indian authorities did not get the names of the bribe-takers?

The Hindujas are familiar figures in Indian politics. Since the mid-seventies, they are known to have generously financed Indira Gandhi. Then when Morarji Desai became the Prime Minister, they cultivated quite openly his son, Kantibhai. In the present team of Ministers that Narasimha Rao presides over, the Hinduja fans are spread all over—from the highest to the lowest. The present writer can count at least three in the Cabinet. One very powerful Chief Minister is known to be looked after by the Hindujas. Even some of the Opposition leaders, not excluding the Left, have had no difficulty partaking of the Hinduja hospitality, particularly when they go abroad. Some of the top civil servants too, particularly in the sensitive Ministries, are known to keep up the Hinduja connection and on retiring from service, find themselves holding cushy jobs under the Hinduja patronage. With such a widespread Hinduja network all round, how can one expect that the present government would, on its own, muster courage to take action against the Hindujas in case their names figure in the list of bribe-takers?

As for Ottavio Quattrocchi, he has been a familiar figure in the Capital's social and political circles for nearly twenty years now. Officially he is the representative of the well-known Italian company of Snamprogetti. Nobody can deny that he has throughout been a faithful friend of Rajiv Gandhi and his family long before he became Prime Minister. He has established a wide network of contacts, and it was but natural that he should exploit them for the benefit of his company when Rajiv became the Prime Minister. For instance, the sweated labour put in by him to get the HBJ contract became the talk of the town at the time. And when this could not be secured by him, the compensation came in the form of generous allocation of profitable contracts for a number of fertiliser projects cutting through the red tape as Prime Ministerial friendship could naturally ensure. However, the public had no idea that Quattrocchi had been courteous enough to lend a helping hand to the ruling establishment at the time by volunteering to play one of the cover-men for the passage of Bofors bribe money via Switzerland.

In such a background, one can understand the high-speed activity of the present establishment frantically trying to stave off the growing public demand for action against the Hindujas and Quattrocchi. A busy late night Cabinet meeting, followed by an unusually urgent meeting of the Congress Working Committee, followed yet again by a meeting of the executive of the Congress party in Parliament—in all of which the common theme was to invoke the memory of the "young martyr", Rajiv, to ward off the likely public demand for immediate action against the guilty in the Bofors scandal, which the Opposition is bound to raise and the Congress benches would find it difficult to rebut.

The ghost of the Bofors bribery shall haunt the Congress and may chase it out of office, as there is nobody to exorcise it for them—not even Lord Venkateswara at Tirupati. ■

(July 27)

'India Moves Ahead'

AMIYA RAO

It is amazing that so many senior Congressmen, including the Prime Minister, should have thought it wise to hold month-long rallies, and public meetings and make use of the government-run Doordarshan and All India Radio to celebrate the achievements of the two-year rule of the Narasimha Rao Government. As if these were not enough, there are full page advertisements in the national dailies informing the public that "the Union Government headed by P.V. Narasimha Rao framed policies and programmes to promote all-round development, eradicate poverty and secure social justice, ten states identified for elimination of childlabour, Public Distribution System revamaped, foodgrains allocation increased by 40 per cent and 11,000 ration shops opened in revamped PDS areas..." ending with "India moves ahead". One does not remember any of the illustrious predecessors of Narasimha Rao—barring Indira Gandhi and her son—having indulged in such bizarre propaganda to bolster up their image; their achievements spoke for themselves. Likewise, there are no rallies in Bengal to celebrate 16 years of uninterrupted rule of Jyoti Basu. Landreform, 'Operation Barga', literacy campaign speak for themselves. However, just now when the Harshad Mehta-blast—more devastating and powerful than the fury of nature in Amethi—is still active and has almost demolished the credibility of India's highest executive, such "achievement-projections" no longer impress the public but merely raise derisive laughter. Times have changed, even the illiterate are not ignorant nor gullible. The word suitcase is a joke, and stands for bribe! Unless Narasimha Rao comes out clean it will be difficult for an Indian to keep his head high.

Now going through Narasimha Rao's list of achievements, has his economic policy started showing improvement in the lot of the poor in the rural areas? Is the 'revamped PDS' meeting the food needs of the poor, so that malnutrition will no longer debilitate him and is it generating employment for him through food-for-work programmes? Are the villages getting their drinking water and the landless households have begun to draw their ration from the PDS areas?

The answer is. 'No'. From several studies by research institutions, and my own information collected from the migrants—streams of whom from Bihar, UP, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and some from the drought-stricken areas of Rajasthan, pass by my house everyday from the station nearby—one can safely draw the conclusion that the PDS is not for the poor. A study of three *chamar* villages in Eastern UP finds that there was work only for 70 man-days in each village, so the landless agricultural labour are working in brick-kilns and masonry; no household of the landless has received any cloth, or grain, or sugar from the much publicised ration shops in the 'revamped PDS' area, even kerosene they have to buy; interestingly, it is distributed to the prosperous few in the village, and the rest is sold in the black market. (*EPW*, June 12, 1993)

Findings by another study include the decline and allocation of foodstuff year after year: for example, the offtake figure of food has come down to 31,000 tons in 1991-92 from 4,70,000 tons in 1989-90 and 1,26,000 tons in 1990-91. The allocation also has declined—it is only 120,000 tons in 1991-92. The situation will further deteriorate, further maladjustment in food distribution the poor will have to face; their future may be pretty dark, starvation deaths might be haunting them, but as patriots they must help Narasimha Rao to fulfill his ambition to go down as 'India's Development Prime Minister'.

Throughout his political life Narasimha Rao has made a name as one who obeys orders; he was the right hand man of Mrs Gandhi during the Emergency, never once protesting when a man like JP was thrown in solitary imprisonment, or mosques in Turkman Gate were razed to the ground; as Rajiv's man he sat like a statue and saw thousands being butchered; again in 1989 as Rajiv's Foreign Minister he readily participated in that murky St. Kitts forgery affair; in private life he implicitly obeys his astrologers, so-called sadhus and sants including Chandraswamy. Narasimha Rao is the typical 'obedient servant' the British would have adored. Now like the change of guards there has been change of masters.

Since the order has come from his new masters—the World Bank and the IMF—to reduce subsidies (including those on sale of foodgrains through the PDS) for the success of 'stability and structural

(Continued on page 33)

TRIBUTE

A.K. Ramanujan

N.A. KARIM

To know that there are more than three hundred poets writing in English in India may be a matter of surprise to many as even the most avid readers of poetry might be familiar with only a score or two. A.K. Ramanujan who passed away in Chicago on July 13 was one of the most famous of half-a-dozen 'new' poets of this tribe. He once proudly remarked that this three hundred was not a large number for such a large country and with such a long tradition of the study of English language and literature. The death of Ramanujan is not just the reduction of one from these three hundred and odd ones but the loss of the most versatile of the group. For his interests and achievements were many. And they spanned the two spheres of literature and culture.

Poet, professor, translator, folklorist and linguist, Ramanujan left his impress on everything he touched or achieved. The intellectual agility with which he shifted from one discipline to another, from one form of writing to another, from one language to another of an altogether different family is indeed rare and remarkable. His first published work was on Kannada proverbs. His last was *Folktales from India,* lovingly selected from 3000 stories in Indian languages, meaningfully classified and carefully edited by him. The book came in the Pantheon Fairy Tale and Folklore Library. In between lie lasting poetic and scholarly achievements of more than three decades. The country of his birth honoured him with a Padmasree in 1976. At the time of his death Ramanujan was William E. Colvin Professor in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilisations at the University of Chicago.

Born and brought up in a Brahmin family that migrated from Madras to Mysore, Ramanujan was heir to two linguistic cultures of Kannada and Tamil in addition to Sanskrit and English in which his father as a mathematician and astronomer was well-versed. If Tamil and Kannada were the languages of the kitchen and dining room of his household, English and Sanskrit dominated the study of his father upstairs. The first two were mother-tongues and the second two father-tongues, as he has remarked. Ramanujan as a young boy shuttled between the two as he was to traverse later easily between the Dravidian South India and the Lake Michigan City of Chicago.

The author is a former Pro-Vice-Chancellor, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram.

The Striders (1966) was the book that established Ramanujan as one of the most significant Indo-Anglian poets of the 'new' school. In this he has vividly recreated from his boyhood memories a world of disquieting events and characters with a remarkable emotional detachment. The simplicity and force of these creations became the hallmark of his poems. Of the rickshawallah Ramanujan says:

> His arms and legs were wholly literate:
> in green and red,
> the indelible
> names of friends long-dead...
> The tattoo will stand, green, red,
> when all else is gone.

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RAMANUJAN'S *Relations: Poems* (1972) was a marked advance in his poetic style but the *Selected Poems* of 1976 showed signs not of a march forward but of marking time. However, his earlier rendering of classical Tamil and medieval and modern Kannada poets still remains the peak of his poetic achievements. Later, when he was caught in a cultural crossfire in the United States as it were, he had to take shelter where he could think of efforts at connecting his several worlds with lasting literary bridges. Unlike other foreign Indologists and anthropologists who went in for the classical, prestigious Sanskrit works, Ramanujan cast his net for the local, oral and the unwritten traditions which he considered the base of the pyramid of Indian society and culture. To him it is connections that matter. "Oral traditions of every kind produce texts. In a sense, every cultural performance is a text in itself," he remarked.

Folktales from India is the by-product of Ramanujan's long search for the much-neglected by ways of culture connecting apparently irreconciliable worlds. To his immense surprise he found several of the stories in his huge collection have travelled amazingly long distances and entered the wombs of other civilisations. This is due to the fact that the characters in them, human or animal, are archetypal in their meaning and morals. Popularisation of proverbs and folktales on a universal scale is an attempt at cultural subversion of our fragmented world to create a new unity and understanding among peoples and societies. Ramanujan was engaged in this revolutionary activity from the centre of a civilisation that is far removed not only in physical distance but also in cultural isolation from his South India. Though the gulf has not been bridged, Ramanujan's efforts have helped to enlarge the base of Indian studies in America and shift the centre of attention from Sanskrit to the vernacular languages. This has been frankly acknowledged by Wendy Doniger, an American authority on Indian mythology.

It was in 1961 that Ramanujan went to the University of Chicago after ten years of teaching in South India. Soon he became the dominant figure of Indian studies there and his translations opened to the foreigners a new, unexplored rich world of the South, its languages, cultures. We are grateful to Ramanujan for shifting the centre of Indian studies in the New World from the North and Sanskrit to the South and its vernaculars. This task that he completed single-handedly is as significant as his poetic achievements. He expended most of his later creative energy as well as scholarly efforts in this direction. ■

PAKISTAN

Signs of Hope

SAHDEV VOHRA

The announcement of general elections for the national and provincial assemblies to be held in October, and the formation of a caretaker government of non-political and non-party 'experts' to hold the elections, is a hopeful sign for the health of Pakistan's emerging trend of respect for the will of the people. The role of the army in insisting on a solution that will eschew the use of the power of the state and, equally, the threat of mobilising mass domonstrations has to be lauded. It is the armed forces who have taken on the onerous role of 'inspiring' free and fair elections. This is a defeat for the prevailing ethos of

> That they should rule who have the power
> and they should take who can.

Nawaz Sharif, Ishaq Khan, Mrs Bhutto and other aspirants for power may fret and fume, but it is a fact of tremendous significance that they have all been brought to heel by the army. Those who have been critical of the Pakistan army were justified in the past, but they will have to think again, and see in them the saviours of stability and order. No doubt the critics still believe that the army is playing a subtle game and waiting for the politicians to quarrel and create conditions for offering "the poisoned crown" once again to a general. I do not see any reason for such doubt or deviousness.

The basic problems of Pakistan is that power is held and wielded by the age-old power centres—the landlords and the tribal leaders. The cities and the industries have added to this power clique a few more like Nawaz Sharif. The vicious repercussions of a large scale racket of growing and smuggling opium-based drugs has created a powerful mafia, accentuated by the flow of arms from abroad originally for the war in Afghanistan. The hold of the zamindars, *pirs*, sardars, and other hereditary leaders of the rural masses will ensure that they will continue to form the solid phalanx of the members of the assemblies that are to be elected. The deep-rooted instability in Pakistan arose from their playing "power politics", and the temptations that are dangled by the drugs and arms mafia to them to acquiesce in a state of affairs where the politicians are in cohorts with these law-breakers.

These long-term apprehensions received a setback by a "revolt" among the educated elite, the technocrats, the lawyers and the other elements that represent a modernisation trend. The bold decision of the Court setting aside the dismissal of the Nawaz Sharif Government was the first triumph of this new spirit. I believe that the decision of the army to keep out of the civilian struggle for power, is another such encouraging, hopeful sign. These are fragile but bold attacks on the outworn, medieval system of a powerful rural aristocracy which is still predominant. The question before Pakistan today is whether there "baronial" powerful leaders will ally themselves with the mafias and the urban "money-lords", or with the spirit of change presented by the educated classes. The masses have yet a long way to go before they can have a direct say in the choice of their rulers. It is a panacea to be universally acknowledged that a free and fair election be held in the country to make the masses aware of their power, and to march towards a democracy. It is not the first step towards this end that is being taken in Pakistan, but there is reason to hope that this time the army will ensure that it will be a genuine election. The power of the landlords and *pirs* may ensure that they be elected but the people will feel that they have a genuine say in electing them. This, as in India ever since 1947, will make the people realise their power and ultimately to flex their muscles. ■

Some Thoughts on Dr Narlikar's Article

S.G. SARDESAI

Dr Jayant V. Narlikar's article—"Need for Scientific Temper" (*Mainstream,* July 3, 1993)—is valuable. Far more so because of its timeliness when the avalanche of religious fundamentalism and superstition is threatening to destroy all civilised and orderly life not only in India but in many other countries of the world. However, I feel that some of his views, though true as far as they go, do not go far enough. I would like to refer to some of them.

Dr Narlikar says: "Science itself arose out of man's curiosity about Nature." Is such curiosity idle? Does it arise because of a desire to acquire knowledge for the sake of knowledge? Dr Narlikar further says that science arises out of the questions "What?", "How?" and "Why?" which man asks himself and tries to answer.

The question is: why do these questions arise?

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FROM primeval times to this day mankind has had to work for producing the needs of life, primarily, food, clothing, and shelter. And normally men have wanted to produce as much more as they can with the expenditure of as little labour as possible. That means increasing the productivity of labour. Man wants to grow two blades of grass where one grew before and that with less labour than before.

This cannot be done without acting on nature (in fact, without constant interaction between man and nature).

This is where the questions "What?", "How?" and "Why?" primarily and mostly arise. Even in the earliest stage of social evolution, what anthropoligists call the Food Gathering stage, man needed to learn how to bring down ripe fruit from the trees, how to kill animals both for self-protection and for food, how to tame them, how to make raw meat edible, how to soften raw hydes in order to cover themselves, how to produce fire, and so on.

Even today the ultimate aim of abstract science is to make human life more secure and comfortable. After all, what is the recent scientific-technological revolution all about if not for improving the productivity and efficiency of labour in the ever-expanding fields of human needs for making our life on this planet more secure and comfortable?

The author, now 86, is a reputed Marxist ideologue and one of the founders of the communist movement in this country.

In order not to be misunderstood I would like to make it clear that by human needs I do not mean only material needs. Intellectual and moral needs are also included, since without their satisfaction a civilised, orderly and just society cannot be organised. Chaos and anarchy are incompatible with social existence, at any rate, durable existence.

I am emphasing this point because it is basic and permeates all human activity, including science. If we lose sight of it science becomes aimless since life itself becomes meaningless.

In primitive conditions religious (blind) faith and the scientific outlook are not distinct and separate. Men learnt what was helpful and what was not through trial and error which, incidentally, still continues to be a vital ingredient of the scientific method. But they had no rational explanation of why certain actions yielded desired results and why others did not. So they attributed their own achievements to various mysterious forces, rolled together as God. All the same, what they did in practice was rational, the result of experience gained from prolonged experimentation. Science grew out of drawing generalised deductions from such experience.

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I have said that science (classified and systematised knowledge) develops through the incessant interaction between man and nature. But men do not act on nature alone. There is no Robinson Crusoe in real life. For earning their livelihood men have to enter into definite, active relations among themselves.

The corollary which follows is that natural and social sciences are not separate and independent. They complement and act on one another. If they are separated both are impoverished, and remain incomplete.

Interaction between man and nature, between the individual, social groups and society as a whole, are an organic whole.

A clear recognition of this reality has to be the "take off" point of all scientific study and investigation. That alone gives us a comprehensive and fully objective understanding of any particular problem we may be considering.

Dr Narlikar says that superstition (a simple name for an irrational, unscientific understanding of things and actions flowing from it) arises from ignorance. This obviously is true.

But in today's world is mass illiteracy and ignorance due, even mainly, to the lack of the means of education available to human society?

Both natural and social scientists, as also humanist thinkers, tell us that what of education the new productive forces created by the scientific technological revolution are sufficient to feed, clothe, house and educate the entire population of the world within a decade or two. Then who stands in the way?

That is where natural and social sciences meet and neither can evade the other. Fearful ecological problems are another example.

The decisive problem facing humanity today is how to control the giant productive forces created by the scientific technological revolution. Obviously they can be used both for good and evil purposes. But their power is so great that lilterally they are going to decide whether the twentyfirst century is going to bring peace, freedom and happiness to mankind or to annihilate it in what our ancients called *pralaya*.

As matters stand, they are in the grip of a tiny minority of people in comparison with the world population. This minority dominates property and political power. Its greed for money and power is limitless. What is worse it is already using its power for unimaginable diabolical crimes not excluding genocide. Either this power is broken and the common people get hold of the new productive forces and utilise them inthe interest of society, or the world is doomed.

However unpalatable, such is the stark reality and there is no escaping it. Dominantly the minority belongs to the most advanced capitalist countries, the G-7. But it has collaboration in the Third World and also inthe erstwhile socialist countries.

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WE do not have to go far to look for an illustration. The Harshad Mehta swindle revealed, as in a flash, what a powerful, and I might say ominivorous, nexus has already developed in our country, composed of the top level of our bankers, brokers, industrialists, bureaucrats, security services and politicians. Needless to say that the IMF, World Bank and US transnational corporations support this nexus and take away the cream of the plunder of which the nexus is the commission agent.

Who pays for this mind-boggling loot? You and I, and crores like us who are not in the ring. And what do these who are bled white get in return?

Communal and all sorts of violence and arson take place so that their attention is diverted from their real enemies and against their own brothers. And in addition they are the victims of corruption, sky-rocketing prices, unemployment, ill-health, police repression and what not.

How to bridle, control and defeat the minority of *Bhasmasuras* is the crucial problem of our age, since it is the problem of survival and advance or universal suicide. It is the great challenge before natural and social scientists; indeed, I would say, before all good men who love humanity.

If I may say so, a scientist who withdraws into the cocoon of the particular branch of science which he specialises in, withdraws from the crusade to save humanity, is not a true scientist. To use the words of Dr Narlikar, I would put him in the category of sterile scientists.

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THE task of bridling this international combination of brigands and incendiaries is daunting. But it is possible.

The first thing needed is a massive popular campaign to expose their aims, crimes and methods. All means have to be brought into use for the purpose. Mass meetings, group meetings, the print media, radio and video cassettes, street plays, dramas, the cinema, other arts and anything else available. For all their bragging and arrogance, the one thing that puts the fear of god in the heart of these misanthropes is isolation from the masses, mass exposure and pressure.

It is a common experience that at crucial truning-points in history intellectuals play a key role. The masses are suffering and discontened. They want action. But they lack guidance, unity and leadership. That is the responsibility of intellectuals.

The urgent need of the hour is for scientists, academicians, teachers, journalists, lawyers, doctors, technicians, engineers, artists in all fields, devoted politicians and parliamentarians, and various scattered intellectuals to join hands and launch a crusade for unity, peace, secularism, rationalism and social justice.

This is not a chimera. It has been done in the past with amazing success.

Once intellectuals light the fuse the forest will be set on fire. The people will rise. The movement itself will develop its perspective and evolve new forms of action. No paper plans need be made at this stage. They will not help, either.

I wanted to deal with two or three related issues. But physical limitations due to age prevent it.

To be or not to be is the question. And there is little time to lose. If we do not get going without further loss of time I am not sure we will witness even the dawn of the twentyfirst century for which so many castles in the air are being built all over the world.

In the end it is necessary to clarify one point. This article is in no way a refutation of the views of Dr Narlikar. He himself has said that the scientific solution of one problem throws up new problems. I consider it a continuation of the views expressed by Dr Narlikar. I have briefly dealt with the crucial problem thrown up by the scientific technological revolution itself. In fact, the second part of Dr Narlikar's article comes to the threshold of my article. It is quite likely that he has not dealt with the issues raised by me because they lay beyond the scope of his article as determined by him. ■

Nehru Model of Development and the Left

R.C. DUTT

May 27, 1993, the twentyninth death anniversary of Jawaharlal Nehru, dawned on a "grateful nation", as the All India Radio put it, and passed away almost like any other day. Sure enough, protocol was observed, and the first Prime Minister of independent India duly remembered. High dignitaries of the state from the President and the Prime Minister downwards, apart from close relatives, assembled at the Nehru Samadhi, joined in an all-religion prayer, paid their homage and dispersed. The next monring, most of the newspapers carried brief reports of the function, and one or two carried photographs of the dignitaries too. What was missing, however, was spontaneity. No one spoke from the heart. The widely circulated print media made no attempt to recall Nehru's monumental contributions to the freedom struggle, and to the national reconstruction after independence. Even the scholars were strangely silent. There were few attempts to evaluate his work and draw lessons for the future. A veil of silence seemed to have descended on the nation, a desire not to be reminded of the traditions of the past which, with all the errors that may have been committed, were gloriously conceived, but from which the country has now departed so grievously.

Perhaps the silence is just as well, so far as the ruling party is concerned. Having departed, under pressure of vested interests, from the basic principles of state policy as laid down by Nehru, such as self-reliant development, and growth with social justice, lacking the determination even to uphold secularism, and at the same time unable to repudiate these values to which in a large measure it owes its position as the ruler, the ruling party's tributes to Nehru would have sounded hollow.

The author, a noted ICS officer, now retired, is a former Secretary to the Government of India.

This does not apply, however, to the Opposition parties other than the BJP. It is heartening to note that there is a realisation among the Left parties of the need to unite the non-BJP Opposition parties to uphold the principles of secularism, on the one hand, and to restore, on the other, the earlier model of self-reliant growth with social justice. The move is laudable, but past experience has shown that to be enduring the unity must be based not only on an agreed minimum programme, but on shared values. And this is where the Nehruvian values become relevant. This is specially so in the present context when world events have forced a re-evaluation of the model on which socialism was built in the erstwhile USSR and the socialist countries of East Europe.

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IT is necessary to draw a distinction in this context between the model that Nehru sought to build and the model that was actually built, or was being built. The latter, that is, the model that was being built, developed flaws even in his life-time. Land reform was not a success and this made a tremendous difference, for in the absence of an improvement in the purchasing power of the masses, production of wage-goods suffered from lack of demand. At the same time, concentration of wealth and economic power increased, as the Mahalanobis Committee reported shortly before Nehru's death. This not only resulted in maldistribution of income, but in increasing the influence of the upper bourgeoisie in shaping the policies of the state.

There were various reasons why the model was distorted in implementation. It is not possible to discuss these reasons here in any detail, but some indication thereof may be given. The most important reason was that socialist consciousness was not sufficiently widespread, not even among the petty bourgeoisie who often have a disproportionate influence in shaping public opinion; and the Congress as an organisation was ill-equipped to spread this consciousness, for it lacked the consciousness itself. Nor, for the same reason, was the Congress competent to implement the non-capitalist model of development envisaged by Nehru. The government bureaucracy did not help either, for, inherited as it was from the colonial regime, it also lacked the necessary outlook.

There were other reasons also. To an extent the failure of the model may be attributed to the outlook of Nehru himself, and to his inexperience as an administrator. His "democratic" instincts prevented him from forcing the pace of the change in view of the opposition of some of his colleagues, even when he knew that if it came to a reference to the masses his views would prevail rather than those of the others. In fact, he was more scrupulous in following democratic procedures in order to build up democratic traditions and institutions than in pushing ahead with social transformation, not realising sufficiently that in the absence of social transformation there was a danger of counter-revolution which could sweep aside, as is in fact happening now, the democratic traditions and institutions. As an administrator too Nehru showed weakness, for with the immense power he enjoyed it should have been possible for him to overcome administrative difficulties presented by the bureaucrats.

The failure in implementation, and the distortions that the failure caused in the model of development introduced by Nehru, whoever or whatever may have been responsible for them, should not, however, blind one to the merits of the model. To overlook the distinction between the model envisaged and the one that was actually taking shape is to play into the hands of those who are interested in condemning the "socialist" experiment of Nehru as a failure. Indeed, the argument, though highly superficial, is often heard from the apologists of the new "Economic Reform" that socialism was tried by Nehru, and though it acheived the limited purpose of diversification of the economic base, it failed to achieve the basic purpose of either self-reliant development or eradication of poverty. It is, therefore necessary, so the arguments runs, that an alternative, namely the market or capitalist system of development, is tried. The argument does not enter into a discussion whether failure, to the extent that it failed, wa inherent in the model itself, or was due to certain factors which could have been dealt more effectively than they were. There is, of course, no intention to learn from experience, and make the necessary strategic adjustments, as indeed capitalism has done during the decades of its existence.

The reluctance to examine the Nehru era of development also arises from the supporters of Nehru who regard any criticism of their hero as blasphemous. This is an unscientific attitude which Nehru would undoubtedly have been the first to condemn. His contribution to the freedom movement and to the reconstruction of India after independence has passed into history, in spite of the weaknesses he may have displayed, or the mistakes he may have committed. To remember him with gratitude for his immense contribution is not to idolise him.

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THE development model that Nehru sought to introduce was not entirely a product of his imagination or his vision. It was more a product of the values thrown up by the freedom movement. The main features of the model were :

a) gradual social transformation within the framework of parliamentary democracy based on adult franchise with personal freedom assured to all,
   in accordance with
b) a nationally approved Plan allocating scarce resources like capital and foreign exchange to priority uses as determined by it,
   relying on
c) state-owned undertakings or the public sector, which accepted these priorities and functioned on the concept of "social good", and not on the motive of private profit,
   with a view to
d) achieve self-reliant development, as distinct from development dependent on other countries,
   and

e) to eradicate poverty, and ensure better distribution of wealth and income.

The last two features, namely, self-reliant development with social justice, as well as the first, that is, democracy with adult franchise, represented values which emerged directly out of the freedom struggle, and which indeed formed the main objectives of the movement. The other two, which were strategic in nature, namely, planning and the public sector, may be regarded as Nehru's contribution to India's development, but they were undoubtedly heavily influenced by the Soviet pattern as it developed in the thirties.

Add to these politico-economic features the social concept of secularism, and the model of development pursued by Nehru is complete, To Nehru, secularism was not merely *Sarva Dharma Samabhava* (equal regard for all religions), a vague ideal, unattainable, except by seers and philosophers, but, more realistically, a complete divorce of religion from politics. All the other concepts favoured by Nehru, such as non-alignment in international affairs, decentralisation or Panchayati Raj in domestic affairs, or even cooperative farming on a voluntary basis as sponsored by him at the Nagpur Congress 1959 were but corollaries of the basic ideals of self-reliance, democracy and social justice.

If this is the legacy left behind by the freedom movement and the first decade-and-a-half of independence, the issue before the country is: how relevant is the legacy now in the present context of national and international affairs. The issue is not Nehru, though he contributed to the legacy in a measure, brilliantly articulated it, incorporated various aspects of it in policy-frames and secured a national consensus for its implementation, but may have, at the same time, failed fully to implement the policies. The failure will undoubtedly be noted by history whose verdict on Nehru may be awaited by those interested in an assessment of his personality. In the meantime, the issue before the country is whether the legacy should be pursued or reversed and, if the latter, what the consequences of such a reversal are likely to be.

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THE issue assumes urgency in the present context, both international and national. Internationally, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist countries of East Europe, whatever may have been the reasons for the collapse, has provided an opportunity to the developed capitalist countries (G-7 countries led by the United States) to discredit the concept of socialism in all its forms, and force the developing countries of the Third World to integrate with the global capitalist economy in subsidiary capacities, for the greater profit and "glory" of the former. This has posed a danger to underdeveloped countries like India who are being stampeded into courses of action which deprive them of the opportunity of full, independent development. The position of India in this context is obvious. A market-friendly policy of "liberalisation" is being adopted on the plea that there is no alternative to it.

It is necessary in this situation for all those who believe in an alternative form of self-reliant development which ensures justice and fair play to millions of the deprived citizens, call it socialism or by any other name, to unite and stem the tide. The danger is too imminent for those who oppose the present set of policies to magnify their ideological differences, or press their sectarian interests, for, while individual parties, or even small groups of parties, may achieve some success locally they are all in danger of being rendered irrelevant, unless they unite on an all-India basis.

Nationally, the domestic scene is equally grim. The Gandhi-Nehru tradition has faded, and the Congress, which was once inspired by idealism and by a vision of the future, has now "fallen prey" as Rajni Kothari put it, "to the triple phenomenon of criminalisation, corruption and communalisation". (*The Times of India,* June 5, 1993 "Coming Congress Debacle" by Rajni Kothari) The Congress is now terminally sick, and is in no position to deal with the growing religious and ethnic intransigence. The *Sangh Parivar,* with its fascist undertone and anti-national outlook—which equates the nation to a religious community—presents a menace which the Congress, preoccupied with its own struggle for existence, is unable even to contain. The failure of the Congress to stop the anti-constitutional vandalism of the *Sangh Parivar* at Ayodhya on December 6, 1992, the subsequent half-hearted action against the constituents of the *Parivar,* that is, the VHP, RSS *et al.,* and the recent *bandh* call in West Bengal (which by a queer "coincidence" tallied with the call given by the BJP), provide ample illustrations of their attitude towards the growing menace of communalism. The last decision, that is, the *bandh* call, clearly illustrates the class character of the Congress. They obviously regard the Left Front in West Bengal as a greater danger than the communalisation of politics.

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THE Congress, though fatally ill, continues to rule the country on borrowed time on the ostensible plea that there is no apparent alternative to it. The plea derives plausibility from the fact that, apart from the long-standing Communist Parties, which unfortunately have also splintered themselves, those that have sprung up in opposition to the Congress have taken up limited issues or represent small groups. The only apparent exception to this is the BJP which has staked its claim high, and has challenged a basic principle of state policy, namely, secularism, but has no consistant economic policy. For the rest, even the Janatal Dal—the most important among them—whose main plank was anti-corruption, failed to take a consistent line on economic policies, and preferred instead to rouse sectional passions by sponsoring a policy of reservations based on the criteria of castes and not incomes.

In the circumstances, the only parties that can introduce an all-India perspective and lead a co-ordinated, national opposition to the Congress are the Left parties including, of course, the two Communist Parties: the CPI-M and the CPI. This is not to say that these parties, or their forbears, have not in the past made grievous mistakes. Apart from the pre-independence opposition to the 'Quit India' movement, the adventurist stand of the Communist Party after independence was undoubtedly a mistake. The Left parties also lost an opportunity, immediately after independence, to strengthen the socialist forces by lending support to Nehru against his conservative colleagues. The recommendations of the Economic Programme Committee over which Nehru himself had presided, could, for instance, have been fully implemented instead of being heavily diluted, as they were, in operation. The futile opposition of the then Communist Party and of various groups of socialists, constituting the parties of the Left, only isolated Nehru from the progressive forces in the country.

Nevertheless, in spite of all the mistakes of the past, the present situation calls for a coordinating, catalytic role of the Left parties, specially those who profess Marxism. This is so, for at least three reasons. The first and perhaps the most important reason is that the ideological barrier between the Marxists and the Nehru model of development have in the present context disappeared. With the collapse of the erstwhile Soviet Union some of the basic postulates of the Marxist movement, such as the dictatorship of the proletariat, democratic centralism, *et al.*, stand discredited. The Left parties of India have rightly accepted the constitutional democratic path, and it must be said to their credit that within this democratic framework they have acheived better results in matters like land reform in Kerala and West Bengal than in other States. There is nothing, therefore, at present in the basic features of the Nehru model of development, listed earlier in this article, which could be unacceptable to the Marxists.

The second and the third reasons arise from the twin dangers which presently threaten India. Internationally, India is faced with an onslaught of the world capitalist economy to force integration with them on other own terms, an onslaught which is aided by a strong comprador element within the country. This is indeed neo-colonialism, and no group has a better perception of this phenomenon and a more consistent record of anti-colonialism (including anti-neo-colonialism) than the Marxist. Domestically, the danger arises from attack on secularism which threatens to divide the nation on grounds of religion. Here again, no one can claim better secular credentials than the Marxists who regard that the only real division in society is into classes determined by production relations, and that any other criterion of division such as religion, caste or region; is merely an attempt to divert attention from the class reality.

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THE partition of the country in 1947 showed how religious passion was utilised in an underdeveloped country with masses of ignorant, tradition-bound people, to carve out an area of influence, on the then prospective withdrawal of the colonial power. A similar situation has arisen now with the gradual weakening of the consensus on the basis of which the Congress governed the country for more than four decades after independence, and the threatened collapse of the Congress. The role of pre-independence Muslim League is now being played by the *Sangh Parivar*, and numerous regional groups such as the Akalis in Punjab, the ULFA in Assam, the insurgents in the North-East, the Jharkhandis, the Gorkhas, the Bodos, are all trying to muscle in for their share in the new power structure. History may not repeat itself in precise terms, but the damage on this occasion may be even greater than in 1947, for there is no Gandhi-Nehru combination now to limit it. The recent events in the erstwhile Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia should indeed serve as a warning. Religious and ethnic chauvinism has reduced a former superpower to Third World status, while in Yugoslavia it has replaced orderly progress by death and destruction.

This is not to suggest that religion and ethnicity are alone to blame. A good deal depends on how these differences are handled. The fact, however, remains that in the present Indian context religious and ethnic differences threaten the unity of the nation at home, while forces outside seek to reduce the country to the status of sub-contractors of the multinational corporations of the developed capitalist countires, depriving it of even the right of independent decision-making that it now enjoys.

In these circumstances, there is no option but to fall back on the old values of self-reliance, social justice and secularism, adopt the path of planned development, learn from past experience and avoid the lapses in implementation that had occurred. These twin dangers of neo-colonialism of the capitalist forces abroad and the resurgence of religious intolerance of the majority community at home can be met only by a reassertion of the values which had emerged in this country from the Renaissance movement in the nineteenth century and the freedom movment in the twentieth. These values were not conceived by Nehru. They arose in the course of natural evolution, and were in tune with the spirit of the country. Nehru's genius lay in the fact that he discovered India, gave concrete shape to the values, embodied them in his model of development and built a national consensus in the task of social reconstruction in the first decade-and-a-half of independence. This consensus is now in danger of being overshadowed by the selfish pursuit of wealth and power. What is needed, therefore, is to rediscover the values, which have the weight of history behind them, re-embody them in a fresh model of development, and rebuild the consensus in their support.

In this task no one is better suited than the Left parties to give the lead, for they alone can be expected to place idealism above expediency and power politics. It is true that in these respects they too have faltered in the past. Instances can be quoted even to the Left parties seeking the support of communal groups in order to have access to power. These are, however, aberrations, completely opposed to the basic values the Left stands for, and there are indications that in the present context of communalisation of politics the dangers of these deviations have been realised. What is needed now is for the Left parties to abandon sectarianism, which has often plauged inter-party relationship in the past, take a broad national view, and place long-term values above the temporary expediencies of power politics. All parties have erred in the past, all parties have succumbed to the parliamentary game of power politics. To write off all parties, however, indeed all politics, is to yield to cynicism. The Left parties with their emphasis on ideological factors have the capacity to rise above such pragmatic considerations.

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THIS view that the Left should unite and take the lead to rebuild the Nehru model of development does not amount to a call for action to the Left parties alone. It is in fact more a call to the millions oof our deprived coutnrymen at, below or near the poverty-line, and to millions more, labelled as minorities, who are threatened with discrimination and even physical liquidation. The former, that is, the deprived poor, must realise that suuch superficial remedies as reservations on the basis of castes have not worked in the past and may be counter-productive in future. The eighteen-and-a-half per cent reservations for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes ever since independence have been largely appropriated by the "creamy layer" of the communities who have allowed themselves to be coopted to the ruling class. The conditions of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes have shown no significant imporovement while, on the other hand, reports of atrocities on them have multiplied. To extend the reservations not to backward castes on grounds of their caste holds no better promise of performance, but on the contrary may tend to harden caste identities, and thus give rise to fresh antagonism. The poor, of whatever caste or religion, must realise that poverty is their greatest curse, and only planned development which makes eradication of poverty its centrepiece, can help improve their condition, Such a development is the basic postulate of the Left movement.

The latter, that is, the "minorities" must also realise that their interests can be protected only by a complete divorce of religion from politics, and that no group is more firmly committed to this view than the Left.

It is only the growing consciousness of the poor and the "minorities" that their future lies in the values to which the Left stand committed that can create the context for Left unity, and, what is more, compel all parties which profess to be on the Left to rise above their sectarian interests and join in a common crusade for a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic, where justice, liberty, equality and fraternity are secured to all the citizens, which the Preamble to our Constitution had resolved to build. ■

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In Memory of Harold Laski

On May 17, 1993 the centennial of Harold Laski's birth (which actually took place six weeks later) was observed at the Nehru Centre in London with the release of Professor Laski's biography at a meeting held to commemorate the occasion and Laski's association with Krishna Menon and India. We present here the text of the speeches delivered at the gathering by Professor Isaac Kramnick, Professor of Government at the University of Cornell, and K.R. Narayanan, the Vice-President of India. —Editor

Laski and India

ISSAC KRAMNICK

We celebrate tonight the centennial of Harold Laski's birth. Laski was a truly important friend of India whose books and whose students had a profound influence on Indian public life before and after independence.

The late Labour Party politician, Richard Crossman, once wrote that Laski's writings and teachings "influenced half the leaders of the colonial revolution". John Kenneth Galbraith, the American economist who served as President Kennedy's Ambassador to India, has suggested that "the center of Nehru's Thinking was Laski's Fabian view of the state in a managed and planned economy". Galbraith insists, in fact, that "India was the country most influenced by Laski's ideas".

Before I discuss Laski's many years of involvement in Indian affairs, let me review the general outlines of his career. Born in Manchester in 1893 to a prosperous, Jewish cotton manufacturing family and educated at Oxford, Laski was a Professor of Political Science who taught at the London School of Economics from 1920 to 1950. He was a prodigious writer who published over twenty books and thousands of essays. The range of his writings was enormous, and while the impact of his books varied, some like his *Grammar of Politics* (1925), *Liberty in the Modern State* (1930), *Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* (1943) and *The American Democracy* (1948) were landmark studies in their day. Laski was also a Labour Party activist, elected to its National Executive Committee from 1937 to 1949; during the election year of 1945 he served as the Party's Chairman. Laski also spent nearly one-third of his teaching career in America, where he became friends with Supreme Court Justices, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., Louis Brandeis, Felix Frankfurter, President Franklin Roosevelt, Edward R. Murrow and Max Lerner. A warm and gregarious person, Laski cultivated friendships with important people, whether they were revolutionaries or heads of state.

For a time Laski was the most important socilaist intellectual in the English-speaking world. He tempered the abstractions of continental Marxism with his own mixutre of Anglo-American pragmatism and faith in democracy to become in the 1930s and 1940s the principal theorist of a democratic socialism indelibly identified with the British Labour Party, the London School of Economics and Laski. He was also a legendary teacher, to whose LSE classes came the likes of Moshe Sharret (President of Isreal), Pierre Trudeau, Joseph Kennedy, Jr., and Jack Kennedy, Krishna Menon and our distinguished guest of honour tonight.

The influence of Laski's ideas, however, went far beyond the college classroom. He was one of the twentieth century's major public intellectuals. As a publicist for socialism he wrote not only more than twenty books, but hundreds of articles for the 'weeklies', like the *New Statesman* and America's *Nation* and *New Republic*. He also served long stints as a newspaper columnist for mass circulation newspapers, especially *The Daily Herald*, and was constantly lecturing the public, on the BBC, at army bases, or on worker education weekends, trying to teach the politics of democratic socialism to anyone who would pay attention.

Laski was a spellbinding speaker who dazzled students, politicians and working class audiences. Aneurin Bevan once said:

> Mr Churchill has been described as the most articulate Englishman of his day. Personally I would give the prize to Harold Laski.

No one on the British political scene between 1920 and 1950 played a comparable role to Laski. He was the most visible public intellectual on the Left. The historian, A.J.P. Taylor, wrote in 1953:

> There are few men of whom one can truthfully say the world would have been different place without them Harold Laski was one of those few. His was the most important influence in remaking English Social Democracy and giving

> it its present form...If today in this country there is still no Communist movement of any size, if all Socialists can still be at home in the Labour Party, we owe it more to Harold Laski than to any other single man.

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THIS then is Laski in general terms. Let me turn now to the reason we are here, Laski's nearly 30 years of commitment to India. Laski's involvement with Indian affairs began utterly by accident, totally by chance. In 1924, at the age of 31, four years after he began teaching at the LSE he was randomly called to serve on the jury for what would became a famous libel case *O'Dwyer v. Nair*, which lasted for five weeks. Sir Michael O'Dwyer had been the civilian Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab in 1919 when General R.E.H. Dyer ordered British troops to fire on 10,000 non-violent civilians gathered by Gandhi in the town of Amritsar. In ten minutes 379 people were killed. A book published three years later, in 1922, *Gandhi and Anarchy*, by Sir Sankaran Nair, an eminent Indian jurist and critic of Gandhi's methods, accused O'Dwyer of terrorism in the events leading up to the massacre and of being responsible for atrocities committed by the civil colonial government. O'Dwyer sued Nair for libel and the 1924 trial in London reopened the whole Amritsar affair with the 'diehards' of the Tory Right wing seeking vindication for O'Dwyer.

To the amazement of everyone involved in the trial, most noticeably to the *The Times* law reporter, Laski as a jury member interjected himself into the proceedings with questions and comments to witnesses, counsel, and the judge. He interrupted eight times during the trial, to ask witnesses or counsel serious questions. One such request was for greater details about rules for flogging, and another asked General Dyer if he would apply the same type of punishment for similar offenses in an English city. Dyer answered that Indians could be whipped and made to crawl down streets on hands and knees, when such actions would 'not be suitable' for Englishmen.

The tone of the trial was clearly supportive of British repression in India as well as utterly insensitive to Indian institutions and values. Counsel and witnesses for O'Dwyer and the judge joked about Indian life and behavior. In his summing-up for the jury, the Judge suggested: "General Dyer, in the grave and exceptional circumstances, acted rightly." The jury was unable to arrive at a unanimous verdict, but all the parties agreed to acccept its majority's verdict, eleven to one in favor of O'Dwyer. The lone dissenter was Laski, which made him an immediate hero to the Anglo-Indian community.

Indians would not forget *O'Dwyer v. Nair.* Sixteen years later, in March 1940, Sir Michael O'Dwyer was assassinated by an Indian nationalist. The trial also had a profound effect on Laski. Introducing him, he wrote, 'to the depth of colour-prejudice', an introduction furthered by his reading of E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, published in the very week of the verdict. Laski was deeply moved by the book's 'exquisite' treatment of 'the problem of racial context'. Claiming it to be 'one of the great novels of our time', he urged Justices Holmes and Frankfurter to read it. *O'Dwyer v. Nair* set Laski on a path that he would tread outspokenly for the next twenty years. He wrote to Frankfurter on the day of the verdict in 1924:

> The truth is, dear Felix, that we ought not to stay in India. Literally and simply, we are not morally fit for the job...I add my grave doubts whether the Indians can govern themselves. But it is better for them to make the effort than to have this running sore at the heart of things. If they fail, let it be their failure. Our success (if it were not too late) would only deepen their sense of inferiority.

Laski knew of racial prejudice and feelings of inferiority from his own personal experience. His father, Nathan, a leader of Machester Jewry and an important power broker in local Liberal politics, had been an outspoken opponent of the anti-immigration legislation of 1904 and 1905, dubbed the *"Alien Acts"*, whose principal targets were Jews fleeing pogroms in Russia. Harold Laski had himself been the victim of a savagely anti-Semitic attack while teaching at Harvard Unviersity in 1920 when the undergraduate humour magazine, *The Harvard Lampoon*, devoted an entire issue to an attack on him for having spoken out in favour of the striking policemen in the famous Boston Police strike of 1919. Indeed, throughout his career in Labour Party politics Laski was often the butt of anti-Semitic jibes from the Tory Press and even from some of his socialist colleagues--like the Centrist Hugh Dalton, who loved to mockingly refer to Laski's far Left views as Laski's "yideology".

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IT was his jury experience in *O'Dwyer v. Nair* and his solitary dissent, however, which formalised Laski's views on injustice in India, a country he never visited, and marked the real beginning of his commitment to the cause of Indian independence. Many of the legions of Indian students who came to study with Laski at the LSE did so partly because of *O'Dwyer v. Nair.* Amritsar had itself turned Gandhi and Nehru into revolutionaries and for years no Indian nationalist failed to forget the one person out of twelve who in 1924 stood fast for justice and decency. Thirty years later, on August 15, 1954, in opening the Harold Laski Institute of Political Science in Ahmedabad, India, V.K. Krishna Menon noted: "Since the days that he sat on a jury in the Michael O'Dwyer case, Professor Laski became one of us."

Menon, of course, knew of what he spoke, for in 1925 he had become a student of Laski's at the LSE, graduating with a first class degree in 1927, and for two decades in London while he worked as a lawyer, in publishing, and running the pro-independence India League, he and Laski collaborated closely. Menon learned his socialism from Laski. He once wrote that 'Laski was a very great man', and that it would 'take one hundred years to realise the profundity of his thought'. Menon had more than the gratitude of the pupil. He wrote:

> I learned to love and respect him in a way that I treasure very preciously. He has been a profound influence on my own life.

Their relationship was much closer than simply that of teacher-student. Laski took a domestic interest in the frail, depression-prone ascetic. In turn, Menon was apparently a constant presence in the Laski home after 1925.

"The telephone in the house," Frida Laski, Laski's wife, wrote, belonged to him. At nine every morning there would be a ring and I used to say, 'That must be Krishna,' and sure enough it was."

The Laskis sometimes helped Menon with money and he was a frequent attendee at their fabled Sunday open-houses. At a particularly suicidal moment during his years in London it was the visit of Laski and Frida to his garret room in St. Pancras that, according to Menon's biographer, "put him on the road to recovery". Through Menon, the Secretary to the India League, Laski met Gandhi and Nehru on their visits to Britain, and he in turn became the advocate for India's cause that Menon could always call upon, whether it was to lecture Indian students, speak to India League rallies or lobby with the Labour Party. Laski's absorbing commitment to the cause of Indian independence in the 1930s and 1940s began with *O'Dwyer v. Nair* in 1924, but it was constantly invigorated by his long association with the indefatigable Krishna Menon which began in 1925. Speaking to the Indian independence anniversary celebration in London in1949, Laski commented:

> I do not know how many times I have gone to meetings that I did not want to attend, have made speeches that I did not want to make, have written articles that I had no time to write, because I was under the grim control of this irrespressible embodiment of the will of India to be free, and I look-back and what I owe Krishna Menon for having made me attend, as a member of his army is a debt that I can never repay.

Five years after *O'Dwyer v. Nair*, the Labour Party was in power with Ramsay MacDonald head of a minority government for the second time. Laski's good friend Lord Sankey was the Labour's Lord Chancellor and in the spring of 1930 Sankey asked Laski to help him plan the forthcoming India Round-Table, which would deal with the principles of an Indian federal Constitution, a subject on which Laski was an expert. Sankay also knew Laski's standing with Indian activists in Britain like Krishna Menon and his London-based India League.

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INDIA preoccupied MacDonald's second Labour Government. Lord Irwin (later Lord Halifax), the Viceroy of India, had suggested in October 1929 that India would some day have dominion status and Gandhi had responded by demanding it immediately, beginning 1930 with a dramatic new campaign of civil disobedience, marching across India and defying the British salt monopoly by extracting and using crystals of untaxed salt. He and 50,000 of his followers were jailed. MacDonald then decided to speed up the process and called the first India Round-Table Conference at London in November 1930. The Conference took place, even though neither Gandhi nor his Indian Congress Party attended.

Laski prepared memoranda on constitutional history for Sankey, and when the delegates arrived Laski briefed them on the history of federalism as well as its practice in Europe and America. He was struck by the enormity of the problem, the goodwill of people like Irwin and MacDonald confronting bitter religious strife between Hindu and Moslem. "We can't govern it and it really is not fit to govern itself;" Laski wrote, wondering whether Britain was not about to face "the biggest crisis in our colonial affairs since 1776". Laski's greatest fear was that "India will become the Ireland of the next generation—a prospect to me of unmitigated horror". What worried him was the analogous role of religion, for his meetings with the Indians in 1930 convinced him that "the depths of their religious fervour makes any plan for effective justice between them a matter of extraordinary difficulty". The first Round-Table ended on an optimistic note, however, the Indian princes in attendance agreeing in principle to a future Indian federation. Laski had been a good teacher and Sankey wrote appreciatively to him on Christmas Day thanking him for his "wise counsel and advice".

Some of the hopes for an easy settlement were dimmed, alas, during the great parliamentary debate on India held on January 22, 1931 when, with Baldwin and the Tory leadership supporting the Labour Government's India policy, Churchill announced his implacable opposition to dominion status and to any conciliation of Indian nationalism. He spoke of "warrior races" and "the grandeur of the British Empire" as he resigned from the Conservative Shadow Cabinet, beginning his long years of isolation from Tory leadership circles that would end only with the outbreak of the Second World War.

When the second Round-Table met later that year, Gandhi and the Congress Party did come. Gandhi lived in Kingsley Hall, the settlement house in the East End. Krishna Menon, the Secretary of the India League, brought Gandhi to meet Laski. Involved closely in the second negotiations, especially on constitutional questions related to political control of a contemplated federal Indian army, Laski also worked on a criminal code and its implementation through the various levels of the projected federal structure. Sankey asked Laski to confer with both the Aga Khan and Gandhi on the future costitutional status of religion in India and the likelihood of Moslem acceptance of secular institutions. Laski had little luck with the Moslem spiritual leader: "It was like talking to a wall. His religion was ultimate truth," Laski wrote. Nor did the general talks go well, and after the first few weeks Gandhi resented having come. The different tone of this Conference was attributed by Laski to the late-summer change in government after MacDonald's "betrayal" in which the new National Government had a Tory Secretary of State for India, Sir Samuel Hoare, who was sympathetic to Churchill's position. Laski even suspected that some Tories were backing the Moslems behind the scenes to wreck the talks.

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GANDHI, of course, was not a socialist. He had joined the Fabian Society when he lived in England in 1920, but resigned four years later. By 1931 he had already adopted his traditionalist posture, eschewing modernity and industrialism and, unlike Menon and Nehru, he would never be converted to the secular socialism of Laski and the *New Statesman* or see it as the model for an independent India. Still he very much admired Laski's commitment to India's freedoom and he often recommended students to study with Laski. Laski, in turn, was fascinated by what he described as the "wizened little man with the whole power of the Empire against him". Laski wrote to Justice Holmes that Gandhi's followers "hang on his words, he who has neither eloquence nor the gift of verbal artistry". It helped Laski to understand

> why Christianity in the first century appealed to the poor and the oppressed. Through Gandhi the Indian riot feels himself exalted, he embodies for them their own impulse to self-affirmation.

The second Indian Round-Table broke up in utter failure on December 1, 1931, and Gandhi told Laski he would return to India "helpless, homeless and empty-handed". For Laski the debacle was the inevitable result, he wrote Justice Holmes, of Sir Samuel Hoare's belief that "the White man ought not to be asked to give way to the Black" and Gandhi's "haunting fear that the White man in India will always take a yard for each inch of compromise". Laski predicted "an India in flames for the next few years and out of that tragedies too vast even to think of". Gandhi left London, travelled through Europe, arrived in India and immediately renewed his campaign of passive resistance.

The evening before he left London, Gandhi met with a group of Labour Party sympathisers that included Kingsley Martin, Leonard Woolf, H.W. Nevinson, H.N. Brailsford and Laski. Gandhi asked the group what course he should follow on his return to India. He asked each person in the room to tell him how they read the break-up of negotiations and what he should do. Leonard Woolf's account in his autobiography of what then happened provides a fascinating contemporary portrait of Gandhi's "friend Harold Laski".

> When we had all said our say, there followed one of the most brilliant intellectual pyrotechnic displays which I have ever listened to. Gandhi thanked us and said that it would greatly help him if his friend Harold Laski, who was one of us, would try to sum up the various lines of judgement andadvice which had emerged. Harold then stood up in front of the fireplace and gave the most lucid, faultless summary of the complicated, diverse expositions of ten or fifteen people to which he had been listening in the previous hour and a half. He spoke for about twenty minutes; he gave a perfect sketch of the pattern into which the various statements and opinions logically composed themselves; he never hesitated for a word or a thought, and, as far as I could see, he never missed a point. There was a kind of beauty in his exposition, a flawless certainty and simplicity which one feels in some works of art.

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AFTER the collapse of the Round-Table Conferences on India Laski continued to advocate Indian indepedence. While Churchill regarded the Indian

Raj as the "Crown Jewel" in the glorious British empire, it was for Laski "the slum of empire". He protested the cycle of arrests and repression in India. In lectures for Menon's Indian League in London, Laski always noted the absurdity of the British teaching Indian students the ideas of Milton, Locke and Mill and then sending them to be second-class citizens in their own country. Laski ridiculed what he saw as Churchill's nostalgic fantasy of Victoria's empire. "We hold India," Laski wrote, "not by the qualilty of our rule, not by a reciprocal interest born of mutual goodwill; we hold India by the sword...no country is held by goodwill when fifty thousand people have to be sent to jail." The British were unwilling to recognise, he wrote, that

> Indian nationalism is part of a basic revolt of the East against Western tutelage, to which there is no answer save that of freedom.

It was a lesson that should have been learned from America and Ireland, he felt. But it was also "a lesson that an imperial race can understand only when it is too late. That is the price of empire."

As was so often the case with the warm and gregarious Laski, his politics got wrapped up with pesonal friendships, and during the 1930s his commitment to Indian independence was intensified by his relationship with Nehru. Three years older than Laski, educated at Harrow and Cambridge, Nehru, who saw Laski on his visits to England in 1935 and 1938, was much more compatible with Laski than Gandhi was. A secular intellectual, Nehru had a vision for a free India that was socialist, where national planning and economic modernisation would end centuries of poverty and traditional institutions like child marriage. Nehru adopted Menon's worshipful respect for Laski, who had stood so bravely in the Amritsar trial, who took such interest in Indian students, who spoke out so forcefully for independence, and whose writings outlined the political and economic pattern of India's future. When Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, came to England for school and then Oxford in 1936, Nehru urged her to seek out Laski for advice on books to read and she did. Nehru's admiration for Laski was matched by Laski's for him. What Laski particularly admired was that Nehru was fighting not only for India's right to govern itself, but also for a fundamental transformation in who would rule in a free India. He told his weekly *Daily Herald* readers that Nehru

> wants not merely a political revolution, which would free India from foreign domination; he wants also a social revolution, which would effect a complete change in India's economic system.

Even more revealing was Laski's private assessment. In a letter of 1938 Laski told Justice Frankfurter that "Nehru I regard as one of the few really great people I have ever met".

It was really at the LSE, however, that Laski's closest bonds with India were forged in the 1930s and 1940s. Hundreds of Indian students, including our distinguished guest of honour, flocked to study with the great Laski, the charismatic spellbinder on what the press used to describe as "Red Houghton Street".

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LASKI'S ebullient personality won him an adoring student following, especially among Indian students. He was warm, colourful and immensely dramatic in an academic setting that seemed to privilege the grey, the equivocal, the retiring and the judicious. Laski's students have written that there was a dazzling quality of being with Laski. He was so learned, so eloquent, yet his eyes twinkled and his personal magnetism overwhelmed the student. Indian students remember especially that Laski was "always approachable, never aloof. Students could go to him with their problems and felt they were approaching a friend." Laski was also fabled at the LSE for his generosity; stories abound about his paying fees and giving personal gifts to poor students, often to Indian students.

Laski appealed to the Indian students that Krishna Menon kept sending him, as well as to other students from the colonial world, not only because of his warmth and his generosity but also because of what he was saying and writing. His support for colonial independence and his world-view, with its socialist reading of imperialism as generated by the capitalist search for markets, provided an explanation and a solution to these students' grievous sense of exploitation and oppression.

Meanwhile, by the late 1930s Krishna Menon and Laski had both entered new careers. Menon had gone into publishing and after some time at Bodley Head he and a colleague there, Alan Lane, set up their own firm called Penguin Books, with Lane editing in expensive paperback works of fiction and Menon looking after the radical non-fiction paperbacks called Pelicans. Lane bought out Menon's share in Penguins late in the decade, who then devoted himself exclusively to the India League. Laski, meanwhile, was elected to the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party in 1937 and he continued to be re-elected annually to the

Party's inner circle of power until his resignation in 1949. Laski and Menon had remained good friends, Menon, in fact, publishing some of Laski's books among the earliest paperback Pelicans. (Let me note as an aside that I trust you all can see now what poetic justice it is that Sheerman's and my biography of Laski is being published by Hamish Hamiliton, a subsidiary of Viking-Penguin, a company, in fact, originally founded in part by Laski's student, Krishna Menon.)

If Menon published Laski, then Laski in turn was Menon's contact with the Labour Party leadership during the years of World War II. After 1942 many of the leaders of the Indian independence movement had been imprisoned for their refusal to back the British in the war against Japan. Nehru was willing to support the War if self-government were granted, but when the British insisted on postponing action until the War was over and only if it were then demanded by a Constitutent Assembly, he and Gandhi and the Congress Party turned to passive disobedience and were jailed. Krishnna Menon worked with Laski throughout the autumn of 1944 on a strategy for bringing the Indian question before the Labour Party conference of that year. They persuaded the powerful National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) to move a resolution on the last day of the 1944 conference affirming the Labour Party's conviction that "the granting of freedom to the people of India to establish an independent Indian National Government will be a decisive factor in the fight against fascism". The resolution called for the release from prison of all Indian poltical leaders and the beginning of negotiations "with a view to the formation of a responsible National Government". The NUR resolution carried by a large majority and the Labour Party stood strongly committed to an independent India. It was a sweet victory for Laski who throughout the War had objected to the Labour Party's refusal to push Indian independence as part of its price for sharing power in the War-time coalition with the adamant foe of independence, Churchill.

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A year later Labour was itself in power, for the first time as a majority government, after its stunning upset victory over Churchill in the summer of 1945 (a victory presided over by Laski who was that year Labour Party Chairman). That fall, a month after taking office, the Labour Government announced a general election for India to help it decide its own future, but the Indian Congress Party, fearful that this was merely a way to postpone real action, decided to put pressure on the Labour Government. Krishna Menon organised a massive celebration of Nehru's fiftysixth brithday on November 14 at St. Pancras town hall and invited Laski to be the principal speaker. Laski's speech, in the opinion of Menon's biographer, "must be considered a landmark in the history of India's struggle for freedom". Every paper in London carried Laski's words:

> Indian freedom is inevitable and inescapable, and what we have to decide is whether that freedom shall come gracefully by British cooperation or, instead, by British hostility...We have to make up our minds...A Labour Party which is unwilling to play its full part in the emancipation of India will, sooner or later, be unwilling to play its full part in the emancipation of the British working class. As a movement that is part of the international movement for human emancipation, a Labour Party which fails this test will pass from the historic scene, for the Indian problem is part of a much wider and more vital issue: the end of imperialism everywhere...Freedom and democracy know no bar of colour, religion, class, or birth.

The strategy worked and Labour quickly set in motion the process by which Earl Mountabatten, the last Viceroy, granted independence to India. Laski, fittingly enough, was the speaker at the London celebratin of Indian Independence Day. The same year he was invited by Nehru to visit India for the first time to lecture at various universities in the winter term of 1947-8. Laski anticipated that his request for leave would be denied because of the pressures on the LSE with returning servicemen and colonial students flocking to Houghton Street, and told Nehru that his visit must wait. It would never come to pass for Laski died in March of 1950; but Laski did see his student Menon become the firs ambassador from a free India to the Court of St. James's, nearly a quarter of a century after the Amritsar trial when Laski became, according to Menon, "one of us". Indeed, as the High Commissioner in 1950, Menon lent the High Commission's limousine to the Laski family to use for Laski's funeral service at the Golders' Green crematorium. Laski's spirit would eventually become institutionalised in India. A Harold Laski Institute of Political Science was established in the city of Ahmedabad in 1954 by G.V. Mavalnkar, the first Speaker of the Indian Parliament, whose son had studied at the LSE with Laski. So legendary was Laski's contribution to India because of his work for independence and his influence on the politcal elite through Menon, Nehru and the legions of LSE students in the Indian Government and the civil service, that it was often said that

> there is a vacant chair at every Cabinet meeting in India, reserved for the ghost of Professor Harold Laski.

It is clear, to be sure, that in 1993 that chair may no longer be reserved for Laski. In the last several years Indian Cabinets have clearly begun to repudiate the Fabian Socialism learned at the LSE from Laski and Tawney. But that, surely, is another story for another night. Suffice it to say here that Laski's ghost was more than welcome at Indian Cabinet meetings for well over forty years after independence.

It was welcome because few Englishmen of his generation gave such service to, and had such an influence on, India, as did Harold Laski—whose achievement we honour this evening, just six weeks short of the centenary of his birth. ■

His Ideas Are Becoming More Relevant Today

K. R. NARAYANAN

It is in every sense an honour for me to have been asked to be present on the occasion of the release of the great biography of Professor Laski, my teacher.

I must congratulate the Nehru Centre and its very dynamic Director, Gopal Gandhi, for organising this meeting. The Nehru Centre, as Dr Singhvi has pointed out, has become a very lively cultural and intellectual centre for Indo-British dialogue—a cause to which Laski, Krishna Menon and Nehru were all deeply dedicated. Although the book has come into print only today, I happen to have read it. Unlike the traditional Indian marriages, this is a case of the bridegroom having got to know the bride rather well before the marriage!

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THIS is really a very enthralling biography. I had not hoped to read the whole manuscript, which the authors had so kindly sent to me, as there were many papers to read up before leaving for this visit. But when I took up the book, I found I just could not help reading the whole manuscript. I should like to congratulate the authors for the prodigious research work they have put into this biography.

The book has revived for us what you have callled the age of Laski in this century. My own knowledge of Laski was in a sense limited. Though I was his student, I did not know him personally in the sense of having ever gone to his house for the famous week-end tea parties. I knew him only as a teacher. That came about rather accidentally. I had already spent two years at the London School of Economics and had during the second year specialised in economics for my B.Sc. course. At the end of two years, I came to the conclusion that economics was really not my subject. So I went to Professor Robbins and asked him whether I could change my specialistion and go over to political science. Robbins got my records and looked at them, and said:

> Yes, your marks show that you have done much better in the Constitution and other subjects related to politics and, therefore, I have no objection in your going over to the political science department; but you must first get the permission of Professor Laski before I can allow you to do so.

So I went and sought an appointment with Professor Laski. He asked me if I could stay one more year before I could go back to India. I said that I could not, because I was on a three-year scholarship, and there was no likelihood of getting it extended, so I had to finish my course in one year. He asked: "How can you do it in one year?" And then saying "let me see", he asked me to write an essay on a subject chosen by him. I wrote the essay and after having read it he said: "Well, I will take you." He then gave me another subject to write on.

In this way, for one full year, by sheer accident, Laski became my tutor. For one of the papers I wrote, I recollect what it was on—the development of religious and political toleration in Britain—I did a lot of reading and wrote a longish paper. Laski read it, and was very pleased with it and said: "If you keep up this standard you will get a first class. And if you do, I will write to Prime Minister Nehru about you." He then asked me: "Do you think it would hurt you if I give a letter to the Prime Minister?" I said: "Sir, I think it will help me a lot because when I left India, India was not independent and I am going to a new India." He then went on to ask me a great many other questions, such as "Do you have anyone to help you in India?" When he found that I did not have any high contacts in India, he was delighted. He told me: "In that case, we will get on famously. I am an 'untouchable' in this country."

An interesting thing happened five or six months before my final examination. Laski wrote a letter to Krishna Menon who was the High Commissioner for India at that time, and asked me to go and see Krishna Menon. So I asked for an appointment with the High Commissioner, whom I had known before he was the High Commissioner. I went and saw Krishna Menon, but characteristically he did not say one word to me of Laski's letter. Finally, I did get a first class, and met Krishna Menon at one of the garden parties organised by the Kerala residents of London. He was standing at the far end of the garden, leaning on his walking stick. I went up to him. Krishna Menon said: "Congratulations, Narayanan! I heard you got a first class." And then he winked and added mischievously: "You know, sometimes you can get a first class by a fluke!" I could only answer: "So did you get it that way, sir?" He then said: "Now that you have got a good degree, do not spoil it by taking a Ph.D. after that."

I was, therefore, rather surprised when I found from the manuscript of the biography that Krishna Menon himself wanted to take a Ph.D. at the LSE but was rejected by the authorities because they thought that he would be a very bad influence on other students, not only on Indian students, but on British students as well. Laski went to the extent of writing to the Director that Krishna Menon was his best student and the LSE could have either both of them or neither. So, he got his registration as a Ph.D. student but could never complete it because he was involved in his political and literary work. But it is interesting that he had advised me not to take a Ph.D. after my degree.

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BEFORE I left London I went to Laski to say good-bye to him. He had very thoughtfully kept ready with him two testimonials, neatly typed out, and handed them over to me. I thought of the letter to Nehru he had promised but was much too shy to remind him of it. So I took the testimonials he handed over to me, said good-bye, and left. While I was going down the stairs, I heard his secretary running down the stairs, saying: "Professor Laski wants you to wait because he had promised you a letter." This was months after he had told me that he would give such a letter. He gave the letter to me, written in his own hand, to be given to Prime Minister Nehru. It was with this letter that I went to Delhi. I would never have gone to see the Prime Minister, in spite of all my admiration for Nehru, because I had no interest in getting a government job. I wanted to teach or to become a journalist. I went to see Nehru with this letter and the result was that he asked me to join the Foreign Service. So in that sense Laski was directly responsible for my getting into the Indian Foreign Service and in a way for the rest of my career. Looking back, I cannot but reflect on what a great teacher and what a great human being he was, to have remembered an offer of encouragement he had casually made and to have remembered it without my having to remind him of it. It showed the extraordinary human qualities of this great man.

Like other Indian students, I was profoundly influenced by Laski's ideas. Laski's influence over India is indisputable. But I should like to say that if, as Professor Kramnick has suggested, there was a chair left vacant at Nehru's Cabinet meetings for Laski's ghost, it was so because Nehru, in those days was very much like Laski at the LSE. The world thought of the LSE as a very radical socialist institution but as those who have studied there knew, there were several great conservative Professors at the LSE, such as Professor Oakshott who succeeded Laski, Professor Lionel Robbins, Professor Hayek, Professor Karl Popper who taught logic and scientific method. Laski was very much of a lonely figure. And so was Nehru in his Cabinet in the India of those days. No wonder then that Nehru needed a notional chair to be 'kept' for Laski at his Cabinet meetings! Nehru often invoked Laski's name and ideas very effectively in getting his colleagues and the country to accept many of the socialist and welfare ideas that he as the Prime Minister projected and popularised in India.

Nehru was a Fabian in the sense that indirectly through constant teaching and reiteration of ideas he made it almost impossible for his conservative colleagues to oppose those ideas openly. They might not have liked some of those ideas but, they could not oppose them. Nehru was a great populariser. His ideas had trickled into the resolutions of the Indian National Congress and into public thinking. Even if many important leaders did not believe in those ideas they had to acquiesce in them, including the idea of the socialist pattern of society, which was accepted by the Indian National Congress. Laski's influence on India and in the general field of politics in the Third World has been stressed very well in this new biography. Today, many people—including socialists—seem to accept that the era of socialism is over and that we live in a new era of strident liberalism or liberal conservatism, or in the age of triumphant private enterprise system. But after reading this book on Laski it becomes clear that the kind of socialism that Laski propounded, taught, and explained with brilliant rationality in his various books, is not yet dead.

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I should like to mention particularly one or two aspects of Laski's thought. One is the pluralist nature of sovereignty or the federal nature of the State that Laski put forward early in his career. After the traumatic experience of the rise of Hitler, he did go back somewhat on his earlier pluralist theory of the State. He was overwhelmed by the triumphant march of dictatorship in Europe and by the persecution of the Jews by Hitler. Laski tended to move somewhat towards the concept of class war, not that he accepted the class-war theory as such or the inevitability of violence or of a violent revolution for the working class to establish socialism.

I am reminded that, very strangely, there is some parallel between Laski's pluralist federal concept of State power and the decentralised political and economic system that Mahatma Gandhi had propounded. Laski talked about voluntary organisations, associations, groups in society having autonomous power of their own, and of sovereignty not residing in the absolute sense in the State itself but being distributed across the entire society through these voluntary organisations which in many societies have acquired a life of their own. If we study Gandhiji's concept of decentralised democracy in India, we will find a very interesting parallel between that period or that stage of Laski's political theory and what we in India have imbibed from Gandhiji. Even today, we are engaged in the process of decentralisation of power to the villages, to the village Panchayats empowering them in a very significant way. Only recently we have passed a Panchayat Bill which will empower the village institutions in India with actual power and with finances for making them function effectively as decentralised units of a federal system. The pluralised concept of power is being asserted today in several parts of the world in different forms.

The other great innovation or contribution by Laski lay in his being one of the few political philosophers who wrestled with the central problem of our time, that of reconciling Marxism with Democracy. When I was a student that was really the greatest issue of the time. The idea of social democracy and bringing about a social democratic revolution by consent, and not by violence and dictatorship, had occupied our thoughts. This heroic attempt to reconcile and combine the central principles of Marxist social justice with the central principles of democracy, to reconcile the centralising tendency of the modern State with the pluralist demands of democracy, was Laski's unique contribution to political philosophy. No other political thinker of our time consciously attempted to bring about such a reconciliation as Laski did. In this biography there is reference to this. Was it Professor Beales who said that if a Leftist can be in the Labour Party and if a socialist can stand with his head high today, it is because of Laski's efforts in propagating the theory of democratic socialism?

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DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM, to my mind, is what is emerging out of the so-called triumphalism of private enterprise that is trumpeted in the world today. One has to look realistically at the situation and not ideologically. If capitalism has survived today, it is not as capitalism but as capitalism modified by borrowing and absorbing ideas of the welfare state, ideas of socialism.

An American writer has compared the welfare state in Europe with the welfare state that has emerged in America. He says that in Europe people followed welfare policies as fragments of a Utopia, as the ideological fragments of Utopian socialism. In America, on the other hand, the state has, over a period absorbed some of the ideas of welfare socialism, not as fragments of a Utopia fallen on earth, but simply because it was commonsense to adopt such welfare policies in modern society. Even in Europe, as distinguished economists like Galbraith and Tinbergen had pointed out, what has emerged is really social democracy and not unadulterated capitalism. The Germans have called their current liberalised system social market economy meaning private enterprise tempered or modified heavily by measures of social welfare associated with socialism.

What is taking place today is not the so-called end of history propounded by Francis Fukuyama but rather part of an endless process of combining different ideas and different systems in the adaptation of society to changes in conformity with the technological developments of our time.

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I should like to add something to what Professor Kramnick has said about the new phase in Indian economic development. (He had wondered if the old socialist oriented ideas will continue in the new phase.) It is necessary to add a little background to that. I am one of those who believe that an economic, social or political system has something to do fundamentally with the state of technology of the time. This is essentially a Marxist idea, but I think it is one of the Marxist ideas which has been vindicated and which is pragmatic. I could project this to the whole world but I shall limit it to India today. We established in Nehru's time, state control over the commanding heights of the economy and almost everybody in India accepted it at the time. This was a period when nobody else, certainly not Indian private enterprise, could have established these commanding heights in our industry and in our economy. But having pursued this kind of policy over a period and having built up a variegated and widely spread technological infrastructure in the country, we could not successfully proceed further in our economic development unless more freedom was given to the middle and entrepreneurial classes which had come up during the period. This has happened the world over in different periods of history.

The collapse of the Soviet system to my mind was not a failure of socialism as such. As Gorbachev once put it, what failed in the Soviet Union was not so much socialism as the bureaucratic and authoritarian system of politics, economy and government which had been established by Stalin and his successors. The Soviet system had become so rigid that over time, while immense technological developments took place in that country, its management system became completely outdated. They were so archaic that the new forces of technology were struggling to get out of that restrictive shell. They got the opportunity when Gorbachev started liberalising, and he had to liberalise if the economy was to be salvaged. If capitalism has survived in the West, it is because it has had the flexibility, for various reasons, to absorb ideas including those of socialism, and to change its management and control systems in accordance with technological requirements. This is no longer the age of giant steel mills and gigantic dams. We are in the age of computers and of fast communications which require a different political and economic management system. It is, therefore, very superficial to say that socialism as such has collapsed and the old style private enterprise system has become triumphant.

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LASKI'S effort to combine some of the essential principles of Marxist socialist thought with democracy, liberty and freedom, was, to my mind, one of the the most constructive theoretical and philosophical endeavours of practical significance undertaken by a political scientist in our time. Laski used to tell his students that political theories are theories of the battlefield and also that they have to be marketed just as other products are marketed, so that people will come to prefer certain theories over certain other theories. Laski used to say that while in Oxford you had fugitive education, at the LSE you had education through conflict. You knock your head against everybody else's, you argue and you get educated in that process.

Now I should like to add something about the role of Krishna Menon. This biography contains a quotation from someone as saying that Laski's was the most brilliantly destructive mind in Europe and that he was an international trouble-maker. Very much the same phrases were used against Krishna Menon. So they were kindred spirits in that sense. Krishna Menon was the first to introduce Laski's ideas into India and they spread in India because Nehru managed to influence the conservatives in the Indian National Congress and through a constant filtering of these ideas into the minds of people they permeated among the educated classes and took root in the minds of thinking people.

What we in India have undertaken today is, to my mind, not an old-style capitalist experiment but a further step, in the Nehruvian tradition, in the new era of technology and economics. We have to provide greater freedom to private enterprise and initiative in society and introduce new management systems which are akin to management systems in the modern, developed capitalist countries. It is in

Corrigenda

Mainstream (June 19, 1993) carried an article "Comrade Shan : The Long March" by the young Sri Lankan Marxist intellectual, Dayan Jayatilleke, who works at the Institute of Policy Studies, Colombo. It was a tribute to a leading figure in the Sri Lankan communist movement who passed away in Feburary 1993. Unfortunately the name of Comade Shan, the Sri Lankan Communist leader, was incorrectly printed as Shanmugam in the editorial note carried on top of the article. It should be N. Shanmugthasan. This name is familiar to old-timers who had read his perceptive pieces on Sri Lankan politics in the *Crossroads* journal in the early fifties.

One sentence in K. Srinath Reddy's article "Arms Reduction and Global Reconstruction : A Blueprint for the Year 2000" in *Mainstream* (July 24, 1993) has erroneously been printed as : "Economic prowess of nations will be dictated by balance of trade rather than the balance of terror." (p. 28, column one, lines 3-5) Actually two sentences have got jumbled up. The two sentences, in their correct form, are: "Economic prowess of nations will dictate new geopolitical power equations in the next century. Political pre-eminence will be dictated by balance of trade rather than the balance of terror."

These errors are regretted. —*Editor*

conformity with social democracy or democratic socialism. I recollect a saying by Aneurin Bevan that socialism is a product of the relativist philosophy under which one has to "pursue with passion qualified judgements". Laski pursued with passion judgements which were rational and social democratic.

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I should like to say something before ending on the element of 'Jewishness' in Laski which asserted itself in the last days of his life. He was a rebel against many Jewish customs as shown by his marriage itself. But after the persecution of Jews by Hitler, his mind had changed. For historical interest I may disclose that in 1939 or 1940 Nehru had prepared a list of Jewish scientists in Germany who had left the country. He prepared that list for the Indian National Congress with the idea of inviting them to India so that we could use their talents for our development when we became independent. So there was something in common between Nehru and Laski in regard to sympathy for Jews who were persecuted by Hitler.

Laski was a great Jew in spite of all his cosmopolitanism. I have read a quotation from a German novel on the great men of the Jewish race. If I may paraphrase it: There was first Moses who looked to the skies and said everything comes from the heavens. Then there was Solomon who lowered his gaze and touching his head said everything comes from the head, from intelligence and wisdom. Then, there was Jesus who lowered his eyes still further and said everything comes from the heart, you must love your neighbour. Then after sometime, Marx came and lowered his eyes further and said everything comes from the stomach. Almost immediately, came Freud who looked further down and said everything comes from sex. Then, suddenly, leapt up Einstein who said: "Be quiet boys, everything is relative." If one is to fit in Laski in this list of great men of the Jewish race, I should say that he combined Solomon's intellectualism, Christ's qualities of the heart, and Marx's materialism, producing a philosophy which, though it was for sometime drowned by the magnificent metaphysical outpourings of Michael Oakshott, will survive the strident arguments of Sir Patrick Hastings and the judgement of Justice Goddard. Laski's ideas are becoming more relevant in the changed times in which we live, in which both capitalism and socialism have changed and are changing. □

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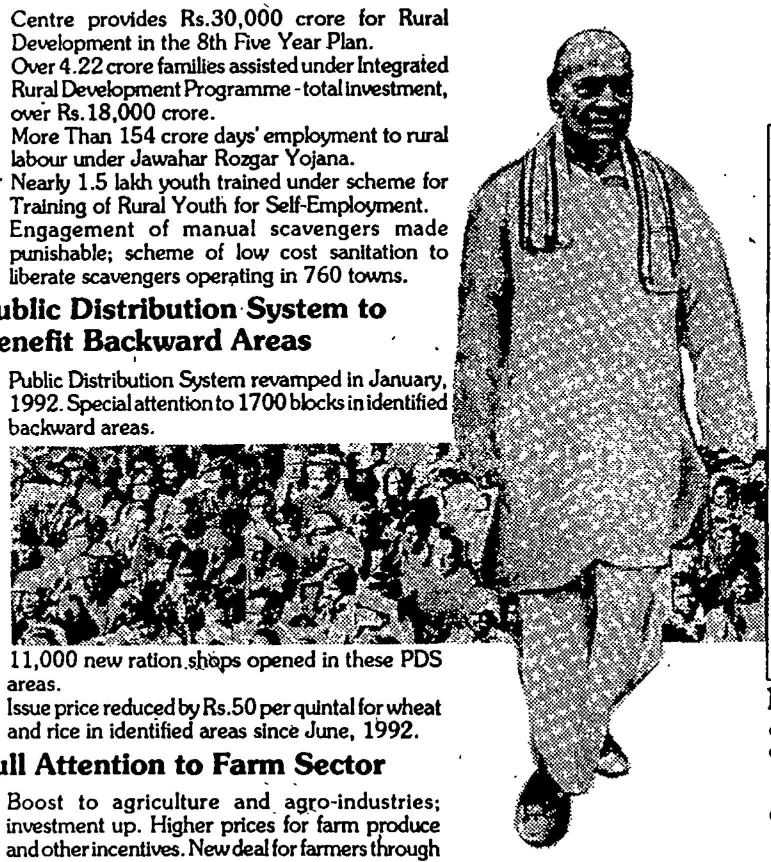

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- Boost to agriculture and agro-industries; investment up. Higher prices for farm produce and other incentives. New deal for farmers through new agricultural policy.
- Record food production and record Government purchases. Nearly 122 lakh tonnes of wheat and 115 lakh tonnes of rice procured.
- A massive Rs.756 crore fertilizer subsidy to farmers for 1993-94. Rs.340 crore subsidy given for 1992-93 Rabi season.
- Complex fertilizers to farmers at concesssional rates. More fertilizers at fair prices.

Communicating with the People

- Doordarshan with 550 transmitters reaches over 83 per cent of population. A.I.R. network expanded from 121 to 154 stations covering almost the entire country.
- Metro TV Channel programmes can now be seen in other parts of the country.
- Four new TV channels for Doordarshan for sports, business, news and current affairs, and music.

Some Major Steps

- National Renewal Fund set up to protect industrial workers likely to be affected by modernisation.
- Private sector brought into the fields of power generation and distribution, iron and steel industry and mining to improve performance.
- Speedier rail service through conversion of 6000 kilometres of metre gauge rail line into broad gauge.
- More funds for health and education; literacy campaign gains momentum
- Result oriented Action Plan to promote small family norm.

Power to the People

- More powers given to Panchayats under the Constitution.
- Agriculture, land improvement, animal husbandry, village and cottage industries, drinking water, poverty alleviation programmes, health, sanitation and family welfare to be the concern of village panchayats.
- Women given more power. Women to get 3 out of 10 seats in Panchayati Raj Institutions.
- More power given to SCs and STs and Backward Classes through reservation of seats in Panchayati Raj Institutions.
- Steps taken to implement Mandal Commission recommendations for job reservations.

Maintenance of Law and Order

- Normalcy restored in Punjab and Assam.
- All-out efforts to resolve Ayodhya issue. Reference made to the Supreme Court; proposal for formation of Trusts for construction of temple and mosque.
- Initiatives taken to improve the situation in Jammu & Kashmir.

India Steps Forward

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Ramaswami Impeachment Case

Sordid Tale of Congress Politics—II

S. VISWAM

The following is a fascinating inside story of the impeachment move against Justice Ramaswami and its outcome detailing the manner in which the Congress party in particular conducted itself in the whole affair. Written by a senior journalist who is currently head of the Delhi Bureau of The Deccan Chronicle, *this is a chapter from* Gone At Last: Story of V. Ramaswami's Impeachment *(edited by S. Sahay and published by Har-Anand Publications, New Delhi). The first part of this piece appeared in* Mainstream *(July 24, 1993). This is the concluding part.*
—Editor

Since we have all by now got used to the terms "sourthern MPs" and "northern MPs", as if these species are animals of differing natures, it may be useful to have an insight into their respective attitudes. There were divisions also within the broader north-south divides. For instance, while most of the members from the Hindi heartland were gunning for the judge, those from Punjab, Haryana and Orissa were inclined to save him. Similarly, the Tamil Nadu MPs constituted themselves into a solid phalanx of opposition to any move to jettison the judge, but MPs from Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala were divided. Many among the latter advised their Tamil Nadu colleagues to persuade the judge to resign immediately.

A senior Tamil Nadu MP was asked by a group of journalists why the motion was being opposed by them. "Because it is meant to remove a Tamilian judge," was the instant answer. "It is a conspiracy of the northern lawyers and politicians against a southerner." The MP further elaborated:

> First it was Vazhapadi. (Vazhapadi Ramamurthy, Tamil Nadu Congress chief and former Labour Minister whose resignation on the Cauvery waters issue was instantly accepted. The gentleman has not yet been "rehabilitated") Then it was Chidambaram. Then V. Krishnamurthy. Followed by G. Ramaswami (former Attorney-General of India). Now Justice Ramaswami. Next it will be Seshan. You people are hounding out the Tamilians.

It was not as if it was this lone MP who nursed a grievance, real or imaginary. It was the general mood of the Tamil Nadu group.

On the morning of May 4, with still seven days to go, the countdown for the "save Ramaswami" campaign of the Tamil Nadu MPs began earnestly. Armed with a memorandum in the drafting of which Kumaramangalam and Minister K.V. Thangabalu had a hand, four MPs called on Narasimha Rao. The MPs were Vallal Peruman (convenor of the group), Mani Shankar Aiyar, N. Sundara Rajan and Jeevaratnam. The memorandum urged the Prime Minister to issue a whip directing members to defeat the impeachment motion. Briefing the press later, they said that the people of Tamil Nadu, whether supporting the Congress, the All India Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) or the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) or any other party, would not like a Tamilian, and that too a Supreme Court judge, being thrown out on what looked like trivial and frivolous charges. In response to a specific question, one of the members said that the impeachment move was a direct attack on Rajiv Gandhi because the judge had been chosen for the Punjab assignment by the former Prime Minister who was also responsible for his elevation to the Supreme Court. The Opposition was trying to settle political scores with Rajiv Gandhi's party and his family since they had miserably failed to establish any connection between him and the Bofors scandal. Pressed to say whether all the 40 Congress MPs from the four southern States and Pondicherry were of one mind, the cryptic answer was: "You will see how united they are."

The Prime Minister had made no commitment of any kind to any group, but it was obvious he had come under pressure, especially since apart from the parochial pulls, the Tamil group had invoked Rajiv Gandhi's name. At least three members of the group, Aiyar, Vazhapadi Ramamurthy and Mrs Jayanti Natarajan, had direct access to Mrs Sonia Gandhi. Besides, there was also the other angle, namely, exploitation of the anti-Tamil charge by the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Ms Jayalalitha, that could place the Congress in a poor light in the State. The Prime Minister had a day's respite from the pulls and pressures from the southern MPs whose tribe appeared to be increasing, since many waverers from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala had joined the Tamil bandwagon. He flew off to Madras to join the centenary celebrations of the Kanchi Paramacharya. But the problem was back on Saturday, with the already pernicious north-south divide getting a new dimension with the Tamil group canvassing for support among the Naidu MPs from Andhra Pradesh. (Justice Ramaswami belongs to the Naidu community, which fact was uncharitably highlighted by some Opposition members in private conversation to trace the support to the judge by R. Prabhu, also a Naidu. Prabhu was also alleged to have benefited by the judge's ruling in an old case involving his company.)

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THE scheduled meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party on Friday, May 7, was postponed twice. It finally never met. Instead, the party's executive met briefly on the night of May 9 (Saturday) and decided, apart from issuing a whip to the members to be present in the Lok Sabha, to allow a conscience vote. Justifying the decision, V.C. Shukla said that it would be improper to pre-judge the matter without hearing the two sides. By not asking the members to vote in a particular manner, "we want to uphold the highest tradition". Asked if the efforts to persuade the judge to resign had failed, Shukla said: "I don't know. In any case, these efforts are by trusted intermediaries, and I am not one of them." The "free vote" formula ought to have satisfied the entire party, but actually it left a trail of discontent behind. The leadership came in for attack on this score also, with supporters of Arjun Singh taking the stand that the formula was indicative of the indecisive personality of the leader. "Either vote against the motion or vote in support of it. Why is the PM dividing the party thus?" they asked. Sitaram Kesari and Inderjit felt that the free vote formula would send wrong signals to the people in case the motion was defeated. The defeat would be interpreted, they argued, as the Congress party's failure to condemn high-level corruption outright. Strangely, the Tamil Nadu group was in a dilemma. It could not complain because it was upto them now to mobilise support for a negative vote. At the same time, it could not be happy because the outcome of the motion hung in the balance.

But, illustrative of the fact that the role of the Congress was crucial in determining the fate of the motion, the Opposition reaction was extremely interesting. Harkishan Singh Surjeet (CPM) was disappointed. He felt the Congress was denigrating the whole prestige of democratic polity. Indrajit Gupta (CPI), on the other hand, was happy. He felt the MPs could not be "directed" on how they should vote on such issues. Jaipal Reddy (Janata Dal) said that a "neutral" stand was a signal for the members to "rescue" the judge. Jaswant Singh (BJP) had a tongue-in-cheek comment: "I am not aware the Congress has any conscience left. I would, therefore, be most interested in seeing how this dormant commodity exercises itself."

On the eve of the D-Day, the mood in the Opposition camp was quite upbeat. For two reasons: first, word had spread that the Prime Minister himself was keen on supporting the motion but had yielded to the Tamil Nadu MPs' pressure in order to prevent a split. This meant that barring the Tamil group and an odd number from other southern States, the rest of the Congress party would support the motion. Second, all the parties had issued whips asking members to be present in the House. This meant that the turn-out would be good. The higher the turn-out, the more would be the votes for the motion.

The mood in the Congress camp was neither upbeat nor downhearted. Partymen were unable to decide which way to vote. Long trained to obey commands without question, being left free to make decisions for themselves made them uncomfortable. Their plight was made even more unenviable by yet another unexpected development. A handful of known supporters of Arjun Singh were showing copies of the text of an "open letter" written by Ram Jethmalani to "fellow parliamentarians" (but aimed directly at Congressmen) to Congress MPs on Sunday evening and passing the word around that Jethmalani made sense. The letter was a forceful and well-argued inducement to the MPs to vote for the motion lest they be identified as supporters of judicial corruption. In yet another typical Arjun Singh tactics, another group of supporters of the Human Resources Development Minister were counselling southern MPs to "remain firm"—meaning "save Ramaswami at any cost". Predictably, when the D-Day dawned, reports were afloat within and outside Parliament that Arjun Singh had decided to vote against the motion. Within hours, these reports were contradicted and there was whispered confirmation that Arjun Singh was supporting the motion. Congress MPs were clearly bewildered. The over-crowded press gallery was all agog in anticipation of high drama and reporters were inquiring whether Arjun Singh had passed the word around about how his supporters should vote. Outside the Lok Sabha chamber too, rumours about Arjun Singh doing something unexpected had created much excitement, and in the Central Hall the topic of discussion had changed from the conscience vote to Arjun Singh's tactics. When he rose to speak, there was a hushed silence and everyone in the chamber was tense with anticipation and anxiety. In the event, Singh made what some of his ministerial colleagues described as a "namby pamby" speech, full of concealed wisdom. But he disappointed everyone since he had advocated no specific line of action or option. His intervention was obviously intended to signal the fact of his presence in the House so that whoever wanted his advice on how to vote knew where to go.

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AS the debate began, Congress MPs, by and large, had an open mind. The Tamil Nadu group, however, was unsure how the day would go, but some of them were so restless that they would keep moving in and out, sometimes just to confer among themselves, sometimes for a cup of coffee. One of them was to tell newsmen later that he was so concerned about the outcome of the motion that at one point he was almost on the verge of demanding an immediate vote! Era Anbarasu, for instance, wanted to make sure that everything that could be said in favour of the judge should go on record: this made him suggest at the very outset to the Speaker that members must be permitted to seek clarifications from the defence counsel. The line-up was becoming clear: the Tamil group would do whatever it could to stall the proceedings, even if only by raising procedural issues. R. Prabhu insisted that the tenth Lok Sabha was not competent to discuss an issue that had been disposed of by the ninth Lok Sabha and hence the motion must be considered to have lapsed. He had evidently not read the documents supplied to him, since that package of material also contained the judgement of the Supreme Court holding that the motion did not lapse with the dissolution of the ninth Lok Sabha. It was, however, C.K. Kuppuswamy who could not contain himself and hold his patience. Unmindful of the fact that he could be embarrassing all the MPs, he began arguing the judge's case, but in a tangential direction. He wanted to know from the MPs "as to how many of them claim TA in a right way?" "I find," he went on, "quite a number of them making false claims. How can we accept that? Even without going to their places, they claim TA sitting right here. But without going in for proper self-propriety (sic), they drag a person who was in the same place for about 20 years and has only furnished his official residence...Blowing this beyond proportion would only set a bad precedent in this country..."

Let us skip the day's marathon debate, the highlights of which were the speeches of Somnath Chatterji and Kapil Sibal, and take a look at the situation which prevailed at the fag end of the day. Throughout the day, Ministers and members took turns to go and sit next to the Prime Minister to exchange a few words, obviously to peep into Narasimha Rao's mind. The number of members talking to Narasimha Rao increased directly in proportion to the duration of Sibal's preroration, suggesting that his arguments were swaying opinion in favour of the judge in the Congress camp. Even as the House was seized of the problem of deciding whether or not the final vote could be taken the same night, there was a lot of movement among the Tamil Nadu and other southern States' members. At this stage, the Kerala Congress MP, A. Charles, provoked another argument by demanding that the voting be postponed by a day to give time to members to study the text of the speeches of Chatterji and Sibal. "I cannot," the member said, "exercise my conscience unless I am given the full text of the speeches of Mr Chatterji and Mr Sibal." Advani protested at the demand while Atal Behari Vajpayee saw in it an attempt to "wash out" the proceedings. Surprisingly, however, Charles received support from two Opposition members, both from the south, Sulaiman Sait and K.P. Unnikrishnan. Sibal was allowed more time to complete his arguments and the debate remained inconclusive.

Narasimha Rao's decision to allow a conscience vote still held the ground, but it was clear that Sibal's defence had made a powerful impact. Impressed by Sibal's presentation, many members, among them some known supporters of Arjun Singh, felt that the party should take a more definite stand and vote against the motion. As the House adjourned, Kumaramangalam made it known that the Congress Parliamentary Party would meet on Tuesday morning to examine its options anew. Divisions within the party had sharpened during the day. The Tamil group began hectic canvassing for a negative vote and seemed to be succeeding in persuading many waverers.

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AT the Tuesday morning's party meeting, a brief one and with thin attendance, the Prime Minister heard the view of many members but remained silent. He found, however, as many members insisting that the motion be supported as wanting to vote against it. In the light of the sharp differences, he decided to keep the status quo: a conscience vote. The members came out of the meeting with mixed feelings. The southern group was by now convinced that if the conscience vote was permitted, the motion would scrape through since the Congress MPs from the northern States were more concerned with their electoral fortunes than the plight of the judge. Indeed, members from Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan had bluntly told the southern MPs that the party could not bear the stigma of supporting a corrupt judge. No party candidate could approach the voter with that stigma on his party's image.

The Prime Minister sat silently through the resumed debate, but he must obviously have been mulling over the feedback given to him by V.C. Shukla and Kumaramangalam that there was the danger of the party splitting vertically in case a conscience vote was permitted.

However, the assessment of these Ministers, and also of some other senior members at that stage was that a conscience vote option for the Congress MPs would only ensure the adoption of the motion and by no way its defeat. A rough calculation made by Kumaramangalam at that point indicated that 80 to 90 party MPs would vote for the motion in exercise of the free vote. The number could be more, not less. Under the circumstances the party stand needed to be re-examined. Almost all, barring only a handful, of Maharashtra and Gujarat MPs, were expected to vote for the motion, while a dozen supporters of Arjun Singh informed the Tamil group that they too would vote in favour of the motion. The Prime Minister, already heading a divided party, could not afford a further split. In any case, he must have calculated that alienating the Tamil Nadu and southern members would place the party in great jeopardy in the next round of elections. Even as George Fernandes was thundering away, he told V.C. Shukla to direct the members to abstain from voting. Shukla was only too happy to carry out the directive. He had in fact been of the view that the option of a conscience vote would set a precedent which might embarrass the party on some future occasion. As for Narasimha Rao himself, he must have weighed the pros and cons of the free vote option. If, as a result of that option, the motion was defeated, the Congress image would take an irretrievable blow. If the motion was carried, there was every danger of the southern States misinterpreting the Congress posture. Besides, a party split would undermine his authority, and create new dimensions favourable to Arjun Singh's campaign to weaken his position as the Prime Minister and Congress President. Abstention would at least save the party's image. The charge that it supported a corrupt judge could not then be levelled.

After the collapse of the motion for want of the requisite number of votes, attention turned to the impugned judge himself. In fact, immediately after the voting and adjournment of the House, a number of Congress MPs told journalists in the Parliament corridor that they expected the news of the judge's resignation that very night (May 11). The judge, however, refused to oblige. Instead he maintained that his honour had been vindicated and there was no need for him to atone any guilt. Various intermediaries swung into action again, among them a group of eight Tamil Nadu MPs who urged him to resign as a gesture to the Prime Minister who had saved him from being impeached. Dr Subramaniam Swamy called on him late that evening for yet another attempt at persuasion. Apparently, the understanding he had worked out with the judge that he would resign if he was exonerated by Parliament had become invalid. The judge, therefore, considered himself to be under no obligation to either Dr Swamy or the Prime Minister or the Congress party. Late that night, the judge called on the Chief Election Commissioner, Seshan, who is learnt to have impressed on him that since he had neither been held guilty nor innocent, his position had become awkward. The best course for him was to resign. The letter of resignation was immediately drafted by the judge with Seshan's assistance. But the judge obviously had second thoughts again, and held his ground. However, pressure from the intermediaries persisted throughout the day, and succumbing to them, Justice Ramaswami announced his intention to quit late on Thursday evening.

With Ramaswami's announcements of his intention to resign—he was expected to carry out his promise only after the end of the Supreme Court's vacation so that he could still avail of the perks of office in the interregnum—it was curtains on a politico-judicial drama that captured national imagination and interest as no other recent event did.

But as far as the Congress party is concerned, the Prime Minister's decision to direct the party to abstain from voting may well have laid the ground for the beginning of yet another factional confrontation. Narasimha Rao had clearly put himself in a position which would require to be defended, both within the party and before the bar of public opinion. He should be on the look out for another Kapil Sibal! ■

(Concluded)

Exclusion of Domestic Work in Market Model

T. JYOTHI RANI and H. GIRIJA RANI

Economic theory aims at the construction of models which describe the economic behaviour of individual units and their interactions that create the economic system. A model is a simplified representation of a real situation. It includes the main features of the real situation which it represents. Abstraction is necessary, given that the real economic world is extremely complex. However, abstraction does not imply unrealism, but is a simplification of reality. It is the beginning of understanding the great complexity of the real economic world. Market model is one such significant model which is expected to explain the behaviour of the capitalist economic system.

The emergence of capitalism and expansion of markets are mutually dependent. The extension of the market presupposes the extension of economic activities which rest upon the former.

The earliest victories of capitalists over feudal landowners was to end the payment of dues and tolls to them and to free the movement of produce from the countryside into the market towns. The important capitalist victory came when labour was freed to move to the market and land could freely be bought and sold. The simple commodity economy of the craftsmen and peasants provided, within the system of feudalism, the basis for the growth of capitalist relations of production. The development of the productive forces in agricultural and handicraft production, the deepening of the social division of labour between town and country intensified the market ties between the individual economic units and led to the formation of local markets, while the economic ties between the economic regions and towns led to the creation of a national market. The expansion of the market beyond the national frontiers was highly important for the origination and development of the capitalist economic order. For a capitalist economy, markets are the factors of production themselves.

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The market is supposed to perform three essential resource functions: it will fix a price which clears the market whether for commodities, land, labour or capital; it will encourage producers to reduce their costs; and it will allocate resources to those who could make best use of them and for lines that proved most popular at the price. Land, labour and capital go where the profit indicators in the market are signalling. The profit motive and the search for a good bargain ensure that what is produced is what is wanted. All these duties can only be performed in the market, where every individual intends only his own gain and is led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention.

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FREE competition has been regarded to as the guarantee of welfare. The model of the market was an organising model of great historic power, which many people saw as liberating them from the social and economic bonds of feudal and autocratic societies. Free competition came to be seen as the foundation of democracy.

In fact, market will not function as it is explained in theory and it is inadequate to analyse the real world. Market fails in the provision of public utilities where externalities prevail and no consumer would come forward to purchase these commodities. Consequently, no producer would be ready to produce them as there is no scope to acquire profit through the sale of those goods. Moreover, some 'evils' such as environmental pollution cannot be avoided by the market.

In the market model it is assumed that producers are rewarded for their efficiency and their contribution to the consumer's satisfaction, but this leaves out differences in endowment. Unequal distribution of incomes results in a market behaviour quite different from what we should find if the incomes of all who came into the market were the same. There is a distortion in the pull on the market and it is of money and not of people. However, it is not easy to discover the alternatives to the market as a system of allocating resources. The market provides a system of rationing. It has the huge advantage which lies at the heart of capitalism; it motivates those who are able to make money to take to the market. By the same token the rich tend to become richer and the poor poorer.

The classical economic theory assumes that free trade among nations eliminates national differences and sectional inequalities. In reality, the economic inequalities among nations have been perpetuated. The neo-classical market model assumes that economic development is universally diffused through the workings of the market. But it is an obvious fact that economic development is at very unequal levels in different parts of the world, and in different regions inside nation-states. Further, the inequalities prevail even on the basis of gender. Thus, pure economic models of the neo-classical market do not explain the functioning of a capitalist economic order and do not take into account deeprooted inequalities.

Alongside and above the market there is the state and the power of those ruling groups which control the state. The aim of these groups must always be not only to strengthen their own position against other classes but also to extend the national frontiers, to subordinate other national groups either by incorporating their leaders or by making them dependent, always to assert their economic, cultural and political hegemony.

Alongside the state, the power of ruling groups, patriarchy is in prevalence and this controls the living pattern of the people basing on the gender. Inequalities between the male and the female have been perpetuating and penetrating into various institutions of capitalism in line with the economic development that the capitalist economic order brings. The pure market model did not take into account the prevalence of the state, its power and patriarchy where the former directs the rélations of production while the latter determines the relations of reproduction.

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THE emergence of capitalism threatened the patriarchal control based on institutional authority as it destroyed many old institutions and created new ones, such as a free market in labour. It threatened to bring all women and children into the labour force and hence to destroy the patriarchal family and the basis of the power of men over women. If the theoretical tendency of pure capitalism would have been to eradicate all arbitrary differences of status among labourers, to make all labourers equal in the marketplace, why are women still in an inferior position to men in the labour market? One possible neo-classical explanation is that the process is not complete or is hampered by market imperfections. However, the production in capitalism requires hierarchy even if the market nominally requires equality. All these explanations will ignore the role of patriarchy in maintaining women's inferiority in the labour market.

Job segregation by sex is the primary mechanism in capitalist society that maintains the superiority of men over women because it imposes lower wages for women in the labour market. The capitalists successfully get benefit out of the inferior place given to women under patriarchy. Gender inequalities will be thus extended from family to the labour market. The patriarchy makes women to think that performing domestic chores, if possible effectively, have been their responsibility. This domestic burden would not allow them to improve their skills in various activities. This makes them less competitive. Further, the unpaid domestic work may not allow her to participate in the paid work throughout the year. All this will ultimately result in lower wages. Contrarily, men benefit both from higher wages and the domestic division of labour. This domestic division of labour in turn acts to weaken women's position in the labour market. Capitalists should have given relatively more wages to men if domestic work is not on the family basis. In addition, they give still lower wages to women on the pretext that women are inferior and they did not improve their efficiency which, in fact, is due to the burden of unpaid domestic work. Thus, privatisation of domestic work is a source of surplus generation. It is appropriated by the capitalist by paying lower wages to men labour as well as further lower wages to women labour. The hierarchical domestic division of labour is, therefore, perpetuated by the labour market and vice-versa. This process is the present outcome of the continuing interaction of two interlocking systems—capitalism and patriarchy. Patriarchy far from being vanquished by capitalism is still very strong. It shapes the form modern capitalism takes just as the development of capitalism has transformed patriarchal institutions. The resulting mutual accommodation between patriarchy and capitalism has created a vicious circle for women.

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A careful examination of the housewives' work shows that the capital and the state set quite a schedule for them. The women who perform unpaid labour, unlike the wage labourers, have no singular and obvious antogonist, but many antagonists—the state, the supermarket and the landlord, etc. The capital makes contradictory demands on women's energies, structuring conflicts for individual women and structuring conflicts between housewives and wage labourers in the market.

The market model did not encompass domestic work inclusive of child rearing, etc. which is very much needed for the smooth functioning of the system. Thus the major part of production and reproduction remain outside the purview of the market forces.

In the capitalist market economy it is customary to take into account the surplus generated through exchange value alone. Of course, it should possess use value. The work which has only use value but no exchange value did not come under the purview of the market in spite of its necessity to generate and increase the surplus value in the economy. Domestic work which includes so many activities to maintain women, children, etc. is done by women but remain unpaid. This work, though it has use value, cannot be exchanged in the market. It is highly significant in generating surplus production in society. Since women's labour is eliminated from the market—in fact it is compelled to remain on the family basis—their share in the total surplus generated will be negligible. On similar lines, in the allocation of surplus, they are being eliminated.

The share of women in the allocation of surplus is least as a labourer and as a woman in the patriarchal family which gives least priority to the needs and necessities of women. As a labourer, whenever she enters into the labour market, she is subjected to wage discrimination in addition to sexual exploitation at the place of work. Thus, in the labour market, the woman is subjected to exploitation as a labourer and as a woman labourer. Within the family again she is doubly exploited where it is a compulsion for her to perform all the domestic chores without which no family or society can survive. Further, she will not be having any control over the resources possessed by the family but in respect of consumption, she is once again discriminated against since her childhood.

The market model accepts patriarchy and will not take into account the value of domestic work. Thus, in spite of possessing so much of use value, domestic chores are being eliminated from the market. This encourages the acceptance of inferiority of women on the ground that it did not possess exchange value. Again the resultant inferior position of women is used as a pretext to pay less wages to them. The capitalist market model, eliminating women's unpaid work from the market, successfully facilitates a capitalist to appropriate the surplus generated by women by extending the gender inequalities. ■

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AMIYA RAO : 'India Moves Ahead'

(Continued from page 4)

adjustment programmes', he has to obey. Thus henceforth the PDS will cease to be the effective source of food security for the poor. At the same time such stringent measures will be too harsh for the powerful peasant lobby—the vote bank of the Congress; so Narasimha Rao's abiding faith in social justice has been providing price support to these farmers; a study by the Public Interest Research Group has confirmed: "the focus of the PDS has shifted essentially to providing price incentives to surplus farmers". And what is more, the issue prices at which grain is selling through the PDS is higher than the prevailing market price! If this is the scenario, no wonder that the food offtake of the rural poor has declined. "Nothing is also heard of using the stocks of foodgrains with the public agencies to generate rural employment through food-for-work programmes." (*EPW*, May 15, 1993)

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WHAT surprises one is that people should die of starvation in any part of India, when the harvest has been abundant and rice is being exported. Yet it is the lack of availability of food which is killing them—in Bihar, Tripura and in so many districts in Orissa. Sadly it is the tribals who are the victims. One learns from the migrants pouring in about the unusual drought—'god's curse' they said—that has visited their districts in Orissa, and the utter indifference of the officials. Nearly a third of the State's population has been affected, but there is no sign of any drought relief assistance. They mentioned that several deaths from starvation and preventible diseases have occurred and so accute is poverty and pangs of hunger so unbearable that families are selling their children—hoping that they at least would get something to eat. The most affected areas are Kalahandi, Koraput, Bolangir and Phulbani where tribals and Harijans live. During monsoon when there is no work and no food they live on mango-kernel collected and stored in summer, and this they have been doing for long—though Koraput is the largest district in Orissa in size and resources endowment. In October 1992 when a large number of starvation deaths among tribals were reported in Doldala village—remotely located in the jungles of Koraput—an enquiry commission was promptly set up by the Orissa Government. The report was also prompt and it pointed out that "the deaths did not result from malnutrition or from any disease, besides malnutrition affects only small children and not able-bodied persons"—thus "to attribute the deaths to starvation will be to contradict physical and medical evidence"; and this was the report prepared by the Revenue Divisional Commissioner and the Panchayati Raj Secretary jointly. "It was the infected mango-kernel which caused death!" But nobody asked: why did they have to eat 'infected mango-kernel' when food is plentiful in the country? This is one of the glaring examples of Narasimha Rao's 'achievements'!

He has yet to realise that no poverty elimination scheme can be effective unless it takes into account the realities of the tribal conditions in the farflung corners of India, but it is human compassion that is the driving force behind the schemes. A visit by the Prime Minister would have helped the starving people in the interior of Bolangir when he was in the district for a short time, but that was not possible because his helicopter could not accommodate all his security men! Nobody can blame him for being over-loaded with sensitiveness or compassion. For that we had a Prime Minister once—his name was Jawaharlal Nehru.

Now let us examine the Integrated Rural Development Programme which, we are told, has "assisted 42.24 million families". Who are these fortunate families by the way? The landless poor? The tribals? However, as a researcher points out, in eastern UP "there was no beneficiary under the IRD among the landless households, the solitary beneficiary was from the landowning community—IRD accounting for 0.4 per cent of the income". The findings of the Institute of Social Sciences (*Newsletter*, January 1993) after field-investigations in four of the six sub-divisions of Koraput district also confirm "the poor performance of government schemes like IRDP, with most tribals selling off their agricultural implements, farm inputs and even small plots of land to meet their immediate needs which include food and liquor..."

Over the years the tribals have been losing their land to non-tribals and are being displaced by mega-projects and industries. Though there is no dearth of schemes, no government has taken up the land reform programme seriously. It is not surprising that it does not find a place in Narasimha Rao's long list of achievements either—considering that he owns one of the largest ceiling—surplus land holdings in Andhra Pradesh and is facing a court case for allegedly violating the Land Ceiling Act. However, unless the land goes to its rightful owner—the tiller—alleviation of poverty will be a pet topic in the fashionable parlours of the Capital. As a migrant friend says cynically, "no government will give us land, they would like us to remain poor forever to serve them and their childrens' children". The self-employment scheme under IRD is not for a low-caste poor, for no cooperative society or bank gives him loan to buy small cattle-like goats which fetch good price from butchers; and even if he borrows from a moneylender to buy these animals where is the grazing ground? Pastures belong to the highercaste Hindus; the only alternative is to buy feed—which obviously is beyond his reach. A researcher suggests that "it will be more appropriate if IRD is restricted to the very poor population, to provide them with small cattle-like goats, hens, pigs, etc. along with some provision for their maintenance and feed, say for a year."

◆

THE suggestion, if accepted, will no doubt help the poor, but whose welfare is today's India anxious to promote? The public heard with relief that 'high priority has been given for providing drinking water to villages and for a sanitation scheme to liberate the scavengers' but it did not last long. To bring about 'structural adjustment', there was a massive 30 per cent cut in the budget for rural drinking water and a 40 per cent cut in rural sanitation. The Central health budget too has been slashed by 20 per cent from Rs 302 crores in 1991-92 to Rs 244 crores in 1992-93. But our Union Finance Minister has a lot of consideration for people who matter—lest the reduction hurts the rich and the already pampered urban society, he has graciously increased the allocation for hospitals and dispensaries by 13 per cent "The malaria eradication programme which caters to the large masses of the population of the country received a savage 42 per cent cut in 1992-93 budget", but at the insistence of the World Bank it has been restored in 1993-94. This is another example of the Narasimha Rao Governments' deep concern for the health of the citizens who unlike his Cabinet Ministers cannot rush to the UK or USA to get themselves checked up, spending a fortune the country can hardly afford.

There is a story in the Harivamsa Purana of mother earth coming crying to king Prithu in the shape of Surabhi the cow, begging him to ask his ministers and important subjects not to milk her anymore—it has gone beyond her endurance. The story is extremely relevant in today's India. Summer comes, begins the westard flight; this year 24 Ministers—nearly half of the Council of Ministers of Narasimha Rao were abroad, some even did a round the world trip—one did not hear a word about 'resource crunch' or the 'structural adjustment' problem when a colossal sum in foreign exchange was wasted. Bhajan Lal rides a Mercedes; Rs 3.5 lakhs is spent on furnishing Scindia's residence, Rs 2.47 lakhs on Kamal Nath's and over Rs 1 lakh on each of the 12 Ministers' residence! (Lok Sabha, March 6, 1993) The nation spends a trifling Rs 3 lakhs per month on 100 para-military and local police force who protect our sannyasi Prime Minister's small house in Vangara, in which he has never lived, like a national monument. These are the priorities. National interest demands that the people's representatives must live in style.

In India that is going ahead the UNICEF has discovered "50 million primary-age children do not go to school, thus adding to the number of illiterate adults in the years to come. The primary school in the country failed to reach the deprived section of the society such as SC/ST and working children. More that half the world's illiterate will be in India by next century." In the heart of the Capital, primary schools run by the Municipal Corporation usually cater for the children of the poor; "50 of them are in tents, there are those running in the open, disband their classes when it rains; there are others which run classes in the shade of neighbouring buildings; there are some again which did not hold classes almost a year". This is how children of the deprived sections of our society—Daridra Narayans according to the Prime Minister, are being educated. The truth is, as the UNICEF has bluntly put it: "Why millions, more so the children, continue unprotected with the modicum of education and health care? Can this be a conspiracy? Or a lurking fear that the downtrodden, if educated, will demand higher wages or places?...Or is it mainly a consequence of the better off cornering a bulk of the state's scarce resources? Or may be the task of educating the poor is deemed to be—too unglamorous to expend effort and money?" And as regards the abolition of child-labour, "the government's stated stand (in the matter) is that it is not possible to abolish child labour in view of the economic situation of the country. Given this approach, the question of introducing compulsory education up to the age of 14 is ruled out." (UNICEF, December 1992 issue of the *Bulletin*) Since this is how the mind of the Narasimha Rao Government is working, his Union Law Minister should be told not to make such ridiculous statements that the number of toiling children in India is less than two lakhs and the government is out to "wipe out" the vicious system within three years! The South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude (SACCS) has questioned both the claims quite convincingly—SACCS' own figure of 50 million cannot be ignored. One need not go to the carpet-making or brass-engraving industries in UP or Bihar or the match-making factories in Tamil Nadu, Narasimha Rao can go round in Delhi's Tri Nagar—where every little room in rundown houses has children below 14 working on plastic shoes, polishing, welding electric Press Power or dying—all illiterate, many have breathing problems working for eight to 12 hours daily.

This is the picture—somewhat incomplete—of our country under the two-year rule of Narasimha Rao, of his 'bold initiatives, significant achievements', of 'the two-year thrust' which is 'taking the country ahead'.

Is it heading towards a bottomless abyss? Sinking deeper and deeper and deeper into debt? Will there be further economic disparities—widening the gulf between the affluent and the impoverished? Will the country be "turned into a bonded debtor to the powerful money-lending agencies of the world". ("Face of Debt Politics", Nikhil Chakravartty, *Mainstream,* September 26, 1992)

Forget these irrelevant questions—India is 'moving ahead'. ■

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EDITORIAL

Subverting Parliamentary Democracy

The self-righteous posture adopted by T.N. Seshan, the Chief Election Commissioner, in his sudden and arbitrary announcement on August 2 postponing all scheduled by-elections till December 18, 1993 is fully in keeping with the temperament of the flamboyant and volatile personality. Seshan's whimsical moves in the recent past are too well known to bear repetition. But what he did on August 2 was not just drastic but literally unprecedented as he blatantly misused the powers vested in him for the discharge of his constitutional obligations to throw the entire electoral process out of gear. Such an action is without parallel; but then how is one to characterise a megalomaniac who boasts in all seriousness: "Yes, I am without parallel"?

Seshan's decision has immediately affected by-elections for three Lok Sabha constituencies, nine Rajya Sabha seats, 14 State Assembly constituencies and two Legislative Council seats. It is immaterial if Sharad Pawar (who was seeking election to the Maharashtra State Legislative Council for remaining the State Chief Minister) or Pranab Mukherjee (who was trying to get elected to the Rajya Sabha from West Bengal in the hope of returning to the Union Cabinet) are directly affected by the Seshan bombshell (although even those who have conceded the validity of Seshan's argument for poll postponement have failed to comprehend why elections to the Upper Houses of the State Legislatures and Parliament were clubbed with direct elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies and deferred wholesale). The moot point is different. Seshan has made it abundantly clear that the Election Commission willl not hold any election in future till the Union Government conceded that under Article 324 (6) of the Constitution the Commission could control the civil and police officers deployed for electoral duties in a particular State. The Union Home Ministry's position is that there is no question of deploying security forces for the maintenance of law and order in a State where the State Government has not sought such forces. No doubt the words in Article 324(1) empower the Commission to conduct elections through "superintendence, direction and control" but to go the length of demanding what Seshan insists would in effect deal a further blow to the already fragile Centre-State relations, because notwithstanding the Election Commission's assertion of being an autonomous body it has, under Seshan's benign patronage or active connivance, betrayed rank partisanship in favour of the Centre on several occasions (even if the CEC has intelligently displayed a degree of "impartiality" through his stand during holding of the Tripura State Assembly elections).

In any case, the "deadlock" could have been resolved—as it would indeed be resolved at this stage—by referring the issue to the Supreme Court. Instead Seshan chose to hijack the electoral process itself with the poll postponement decision that smacked of authoritarian proclivities which are inherent in the CEC. Hence the Opposition leaders are well within their rights to demand his impeachment.

As on other occasions, the Narasimha Rao Government is dithering on the issue and has yet to make up its mind as to what it should do in the face of the Opposition motion for Seshan's impeachment. However, informed opinion in the Capital suggest, not without substance, the possibility of the Treasury Benches taking a position identical with their stand during the Opposition move to impeach

Justice Ramaswami. For political observers are convinced that Seshan's poll postponement decision was conditioned by his eagerness to help the ruling party which has lately been badly battered by a host of developments including the Harshad Mehta allegations and their aftermath in Parliament (with the Ram Lakhan Singh Yadav case providing a new dimension to the acrobatics of the present rulers at the Centre to retain power) as well as the renewed importance that the Bofors scandal has acquired. In no case is it ready to face the electorate at this stage, especially in Palani in Tamil Nadu (where the Congress is nowhere near confronting Ms Jayalalitha, its erstwhile ally-turned-adversary) and Ottapalam in Kerala (a Marxist stronghold from where only a person of stature, standing and eminence like our current Vice-President, K.R. Narayanan, could enter the Lok Sabha on a Congress ticket).

At the same time what cannot be overlooked is the fact, as revealed by Seshan's voluminous correspondence with the Centre, that the Union Government dilly-dallied over the issues raised by the CEC with the result that those questions kept on pending before snowballing into the present crisis. The Congress itself has been violating the norms of parliamentary functioning as is best revealed by its action in engineering defections from the JD-A camp that made a mockery of the Anti-Defection Act. The Seshan episode too brings this out in sharp relief.

Hence alongside Seshan the ruling party at the Centre must also squarely face the charge of weakening the edifice of our parliamentary democracy. The Narasimha Rao Government cannot escape its responsibility on this score by its characteristic silence which only exposes its own guilt-complex.

August 4 *S.C.*

Would Medha have to Really go for the Supreme Sacrifice?

GOUR KISHORE GHOSH

This is a moving piece on Medha Patkar's proposed jal samarpan *on August 6 in case the government refuses to heed to her plea for a review of the Narmada Project. It is written by one of the most eminent and distinguished writer-journalists of West Bengal, a respected and leading figure in the community of Bengali intellectuals. He had suffered for his deep convictions under the Emergency Raj in the mid-seventies. In the wake of the conflagration accompanying the demolition of the Babri Masjid last December, he played a remarkable role against the growing threat of majoritarian communalism. This write-up is being reproduced, with due acknowledgement, from* Anand Bazar Patrika *(where it appeared on August 2, 1993) after its translation from the original Bengali.* —Editor

I have received a letter from Medha. Medha has written, if no clear decision of a review of the Narmada Project comes from the government by the night of August 5 or the morning of August 6 then Medha and the sarpanch of Manibeli will surrender and sacrifice themselves in water. There is no other alternative to rouse the conscience of the country for bringing to bear the enormous pressure of public opinion on the Government of India in order to save the Narmada.

Medha. Medha Patkar. The spiritual embodiment of the 'Narmada Bachao Andolan'. When I met her at Santiniketan some months ago I felt that at last she has returned home. I took her to be Nandini of *Raktakarabi*. But the very next moment I understood, the Abhijit that Rabindranath had created in his play, *Muktadhara*, the same Abhijit has now, after such a long time, returned home in the form of Medha Patkar. Indeed Medha is as much Abhijit as Nandini. Medha has come to call everyone. In Rabindranath's imagination a huge dam was built to satisfy the vanity of the machine-king for ushering in the catastrophe. In reality it is this Sardar Sarovar of Narmada. Abhijit had destroyed the dam to prevent the catastrophe. In the process he underwent a watery grave. Today Medha has declared, she too will go for *jal samarpan* or surrender and sacrifice in water. Medha's decision of self-sacrifice is aimed at releasing Narmada's currents from the catastrophic bondage of Sardar Sarovar.

The question is: would our conscience accept this? Would our conscience not be roused before Medha goes for the self-sacrifice?

The ultimatum that Baba Amte, one of the principal figures of the 'Narmada Bachao Andolan', has sent to the Central Government reads:

> If you do not fulfil by August 5 the promise that you gave of setting up a Core Committee for reviewing the Sardar Sarovar Project, then from the following day itself the work of the 'Narmada Bachao Andolan' would begin according to the programme of *jal samarpan*. Call an immediate halt to all efforts to construct the massive reservoir.

Baba Amte has reached Delhi. The displaced Adivasis of Maharashtra's Manibeli village and Gujarat's Bhadgao village are with him. Manibeli village has been submerged in this rainy season itself. The next to fall victim is the Bhadgao village. Baba Amte has begun dharna with them in Delhi to rouse our conscience. Another leader of the 'Narmada Bachao Andolan', Shripad Dharmadhikary, has informed, the water level of Narmada had touched 73 metres (one metre is equivalent to three feet three inches). Now the water has receded a little. But the level to which it had risen has submerged an additional 240 villages. These villages had not been taken into account in any calculation earlier. Sardar Sarovar was planned with the belief that this would become the 'life line' of Gujarat; but now it is being realised that Sardar Sarovar is nothing but a 'river of tears'.

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THE supporters of the 'Narmada Bachao Andolan' have all along said they are not opposed to development. They are opposing the Narmada Project precisely because it is highly misconceived. This plan has been formulated such that its realisation would destroy massive forest land in the Vindhyas, several lakh forest inhabitants of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat would face eviction and it would be absolutely impossible to provide the waters of Narmada to the Saurashtra and Kutch regions as had been assured.

To just construct the Sardar Sarovar reservoir 39,134 hectares of land have been submerged. The area drowned in water includes 13,744 hectares of forest land and 11,318 hectares of agricultural land. As many as 66,675 persons have been evicted. Among them 48,250 are Adivasis and SC/STs.

On the entire Narmada river 30 massive reservoirs including Sardar Sarovar are to be built (these reservoirs would have the capacity to bear more than 10,000 hectares of water), alongwith 135 medium size reservoirs (whose water-bearing capacity would be between 400 and 10,000 hectares), 3000 small size reservoirs (having less than 400 hectares of water-bearing capacity). Over six lakh hectares of land would be submerged. Forest land worth 3 lakh 50 thousand hectares would be drowned. Agricultural and other land to go under water would come to two lakh hectares. Dwelling places of more than 10 lakh people would be devoured by the waters of the man-made reservoirs. It is almost impossible to provide proper rehabilitation to so many people.

The Governments of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat have not been able to make proper arrangements for the rehabilitation of those whose dwelling places have already been submerged during construction of Sardar Sarovar. The World Bank had given a loan of 53 crore 20 lakh dollars to the Narmada Project Authority for materialisation of the Narmada Project. And it gave immense prestige to the Narmada Project in the world fora. But there were conditions. The conditions were that while materialising the Narmada Project, the Narmada Project Authority must see that the environmental balance of the region is not disturbed, that the evacuees get proper rehabilitation, that their life and livelihood are not adversely affected. The drum of publicity of the government, and the Gujarat Government in particular, created an impression as if all the conditions of the World Bank have been met. But as a result of the pressure from world public opinion, and the 'Narmada Bachao Andolan' in particular, the World Bank was forced to send a Committee of experts to review the Narmada Project. The 'Review Committee' presented its report to the World Bank with the submission that the conditions under which the World Bank had furnished loan for the project had not been met. Thereafter the World Bank beat a retreat and snapped its links with the Narmada Project.

The countries which exerted enormous pressure on the World Bank were Germany, Sweden and Japan. From Japan three members of the Lower House and five of the Upper House as well as 36 voluntary organisations did not remain content by merely exerting pressure on the World Bank, they also sent an appeal to our Prime Minister saying that "we deplore" the use of force and terror by a democratic country like India (on the issue of Sardar Sarovar), and "we hope that India would come forward to prevent this catastrophe in conformity with its history and culture".

The environmentalists of Germany and Sweden have held the World Bank authorities responsible for all the ills afflicting the Sardar Sarovar Project. And these environmentalists have demanded the resignation of those officials who had made adventurist moves like extending loan for the project. The World Bank has not withdrawn from the project on its own.

Medha Patkar too is of the same view. If we can exert adequate pressure on our government the government would be forced to pull out of this ill-conceived project. It is the responsibility of our conscience to exert pressure on our government. When would that conscience be roused? After Medha sacrifices her life? ■

Tragedy of Bargi Dam Evictees

BHARAT DOGRA

Bargi dam was the first large dam to be constructed on the Narmada river. As a number of large dam projects are planned on the Narmada river and the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) which is under construction has already become so controversial, it is instructive to look at the experience of the people who were evicted by the Bargi Project (BP). The BP has been constructed near the city of Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh.

This dam has caused the displacement of about 70 thousand people living in 162 villages of Mandla, Seoni and Jabalpur districts. A substantial number of affected people—over 40 per cent—are tribals, mainly Gond tribals.

A significant number of adversely affected people were left out of the rehabilitation effort. Another section were given only cash compensation. The cash compensation was much less than the prevailing market rate of the land. In one survey it has been found that the rate at which compensation was given was less than one-fifth of the market rate.

Some persons were given resettlement land at wrongly identified places about which it was later revealed that these places also fall in the submergence area of the dam. Hence some of the so-called resettled people were also affected by the dam waters and the snakes and scorpions that came with this water.

It is true that some model villages were also set up by the BP authorities for the displaced people. But as cultivable land was not available and the forestry rights of the people had also been curtailed, the people had no livelihood prospects in these villages. So they started migrating in large numbers. The buildings remained but the people who were supposed to benefit from these buildings were not there.

First, the funds made available for rehabilitation were very inadequate. But this problem was compounded by the misuse of funds. The available limited funds were squandered without taking the adversely affected people into confidence regarding how the limited funds could be used for maximum benefit. The result is that the overwhelming majority of the people have been left in very difficult conditions. Several school-going children have been forced to use boats, or walk on very muddy path, or entirely give up going to school.

In such projects invariably a few well-connected persons manage to use their influence and even improve their prospects. But leaving aside a small number of such people there is no doubt that a lot of people living a reasonable satisfactory life earlier have now been pushed below the poverty line after being displaced by the dam. Many of them have been forced to turn into migrant labourers. Several others have turned into local slum-dwellers taking up any uncertain job like that of rickshaw pulling which becomes available. The situation is so bad that starvation deaths have been reported even from the 'model' village of Gorakhpur.

The adversely affected people are now struggling valiantly for the widely accepted rights of displaced people. They are demanding jobs and land, or any satisfactory means of livelihood. There are several possibilities of providing immediate relief such as allowing them to cultivate the old land after the flood waters recede or reserving the fisheries work for them.

The government should not hesitate to accept the responsibility for the grave damage that has been done to thousands of people like in the BP submergence area and it should take definite steps to provide satisfactory rehabilitation for the displaced people—combining some steps of immediate relief with sound long-term planning for proper rehabilitation. ■

V.P. Singh and Votaries of Suitcase Capitalism

HARISH KHARE

It is perhaps no coincidence that one of the most acerbic exchanges during last week's debate on the no-confidence motion took place between V.P. Singh and Dr Manmohan Singh. After all the two do represent directly antagonistic impulses in the Indian polity. The former Prime Minister, by general acclaim, is seen, at best, as an adventurist and at worst, as a disruptionist. Political correctness enjoins that everything he says or does is to be reviled. Even the choice of his clothes is to be ridiculed. His plank of social justice is dubbed a dangerous ploy of a dangerous demogogue.

Dr Manmohan Singh, on the other hand, is hailed as a brave reformer who has unshackled our hitherto dormant entrepreneurial energies. The votaries of crony capitalism have come to pin their hopes on the Finance Minister to insulate the Indian economy from the vagaries of political turbulence. It was, therefore, no coincidence that Dr Manmohan Singh should have provoked the parliamentary fracas by interrupting V.P. Singh when he was homing in on the infirmities of the Goldstar enterprise.

Even though the Narasimha Rao Government has survived the no-confidence motion, the clash between the two tendencies, represented by the two Singhs, is only going to get sharper in the days to come. That is why V.P. Singh has, like a bad penny, turned up again. Despite the hostility he has encountered from the New Delhi establishment, he simply cannot be wished away. The fact of the matter is that there is a certain durability to the ideas and dreams he seeks to hawk in the great Indian political *bazar*. Admittedly his sales pitch may at times be faulty, and at times his wares may be defective, but he will become a relevant market player every time the customer finds himself short-changed by the vendors of spurious nationalism and vacuous stability. Above all, V.P. Singh seems to have recovered his gift for addressing himself to the *locus paenitentiae* in the mind of the electorate.

◆

INDEED, if V.P. Singh is again making his presence felt it is because the polity has seen a quiet revival of anti-Congressism, which was supposed to have been buried once and for all. Anti-Congressism, all said and done, is nothing but a cumulative convergence of interests and impulses which periodically reassert themselves whenever the unwholesome nature of the establishment is judged, especially by the middle classes, to be jeopardising the best interests of the Indian state.

For example, while the Opposition has been castigated for opportunistically and cynically ganging up against the Narasimha Rao Government, this indictment does not adequately explain why the National Front-Left Front joined hands with the BJP when only six months ago the two were hurling the choicest invectives at Advani and company. To Narasimha Rao must go the credit for resuscitating this anti-Congressism. It is obvious that Narasimha Rao is no longer in a position to check, even if he was so inclined, the emergence of powerful satraps in the Congress. Witness, for example, how in Gujarat the Chief Minister, Chimanbhai Patel, has insisted that his wife should get the Rajya Sabha nomination; in Haryana, the Chief Minister, Bhajan Lal, has set the stage for the induction of his son, Mohan, in the State Cabinet; in Andhra Pradesh, the Chief Minister, Vijay Bhaskar Reddy's son is already behaving as if he is the Congress candidate for the forthcoming Kurnol Lok Sabha by-election, even though the party is yet to consider the question; and, in Kerala, the Chief Minister's son is considered to be the second most important man in the State. All these developments do not necessarily endear the Congress to the middle classes whose disenchantment has always been an essential precondition for the potency of anti-Congress sentiments.

Moreover, if the Prime Minister is going to jettison his earlier approach of "live and let live" and allows his partymen to tighten the screws on Jyoti Basu in West Bengal and Ms Jayalalitha in Tamil Nadu, he will inevitably provoke a revival of anti-Congressism. That revival, for better or worse, provides V.P. Singh with a *raison d'etre* once again.

So intractable and, at times, irrational, has been the hostility, particularly among Congressmen, to the former Prime Minister that it is overlooked that V.P. Singh's political debility, though largely self-inflicted, has added to the BJP's strength. Pieces from the V.P. Singh constituency have been picked up not by the Congress but the BJP. It may be, therefore, in the Congress interest to keep the former Prime Minister politically alive. This is certainly true in terms of fragmented electoral arithmetic in the northern States.

On the other hand, a vibrant V.P. Singh platform can also prevent the inevitable marginalisation of the "moderates"— the likes of L.K. Advani and Atal Behari Vajpayee—within the *Sangh Parivar*. As long as V.P. Singh is around to preach his message of social egalitarianism, the BJP will be forced to be a party of inclusion and it will be constrained to resolve the contradiction between the ugly demands of an unalloyed *Hindutva* platform and the demands of electoral supporters among the backward castes, impatient for a piece of the cake.

APPEAL TO CITIZENS

The outrage at Ayodhya and subsequent events have rudely shaken the foundations of communal amity and threatened the very existence of the modern Indian State.

The paramount need today is to promote awareness of this crisis and secure the commitment of citizens to the ideals of secularism and democracy. Please sign the pledge and retain a copy of the pledge and display it prominently in your home/workplace. The campaign's objective is to collect 2 crore individual pledges over a certain period of time.

You can make photocopies of this pledge and become a volunteer by collecting more signatures for the campaign. At the end of this campaign a public rally should be organised in every town/city where the pledges have been taken.

Pledge

○ **I have a dream of a peaceful, united, humane, egalitarian and prosperous India.**

○ **I believe that this dream cannot be realised without rooting out communalism from our land.**

○ **I pledge myself to preserve and strengthen, India's unity and communal harmony.**

○ **I solemnly commit myself to the vow which Gandhiji asked of all Indians:**

"With God as witness, we Hindus and Mohamedans declare that we shall behave towards one another as children of the same parents, that we shall have no differences, that the sorrows of each shall be the sorrows of the other and that each shall help the other in removing them. We shall respect each other's religion and religious feelings and shall not stand in the way of our respective religious practices. We shall always refrain from violence to each other in the name of religion."

Signature ________________ Name ________________

Address ____

______________________________ Date ____________

Issued by: Working Group on Alternative Strategies
Please post the signed pledge to: Editor, *Mainstream*,
F-24, Bhagat Singh Market, New Delhi 110 001.

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ONE of the most crucial facets of Indian polity today is that despite all his missteps, misdeeds, mistakes, miscalculations and misadventures, V.P. Singh's specific political space remains secure. Beyond a point it does not matter whether the former Prime Minister is able to cobble together a reasonably stable coalition of the Janata *Parivar* major domos; what matters is that he retains a capacity to articulate cogently the aspirations of a sizeable chunk of the Indian electorate. Interestingly, not enough credence is given to V.P. Singh's caveat that he is competing in a marathon race rather than in a 100-metre dash. He does see his role as one of incrementally impinging upon the national agenda while his critics and even admirers prefer to judge him by the ups and downs in the electoral exchanges. As it is even without much acknowledgement, he has already made the Mandal-related sentiment politically respectable.

Above all, V.P. Singh's presence ensures the articulation of an alternative, activist vision of the Indian state, in sharp contrast to the Dr Manmohan Singh-inspired wisdom that the state ought to disengage itself from any task of social engineering. This preference for disengagement is predicated on an assumption that the middle classes are so deeply prejudiced against any egalitarian agenda that they will joyfully pay obeisance to the new cult of stability, irrespective of the excesses of the Harshad Mehtas and the Bhupen Dalals. But the middle classes should not be expected to tolerate unprotestingly the open sale and purchase of the loyalty of our legislators.

More than anything else the polity needs to send out signals that there are still leaders whose impulses have not been totally contaminated by the votaries of suitcase capitalism. The democratic system cannot hope to retain its legitimacy for long if it becomes apparent to the masses that no voices are going to be raised against power-brokers and stock-brokers. The system should, in fact, be thankful to V.P. Singh that he is still rattling his sabre. ■

(Courtesy: *The Times of India*)

Federalism in Perspective

Problems and Prospects for North-East India

B.K. ROY BURMAN

Conventionally federalism is a constitutional or legal device of "dividing powers so that the general and the regional governments are each within a sphere coordinate and independent". But in the context of the emergence of the polity of welfare state, the idea of 'cooperative federalism' gained ground at the cost of the idea of coordinate and independent federalism. It had two implications. First, it facilitated the centralising tendencies of the polity to gain momentum; second, it broadened the arena of federalism.

Currently, federalism is no longer looked upon only as a legal framework of sharing power in the matters of access to resources and regulation of different spheres of life of the concerned peoples. In its ideal-typical form (as distinct from real life situation) if in the past federalism was the product of the power game on the political chess-board, today politics is tending to be the handmaid of the social, cultural and moral economic concerns (more or less in the same sense in which Scott uses the term 'moral economy') of the community. In other words, if in the past federalism was envisaged with references to the arrangement of the state and of its coordinate or subsidiary or ancillary organs, today federalism is more and more perceived as the operative realm of interacting communities with their histories, their identity markers, their dynamics of boundary maintenance and oscillating linkages of the same—vertically and horizontally.

Hence when one speaks of federalism today, one frequently expresses the stir in the deeper structure of one's mind ensconsing the agonies, aspirations, grit and vision of the collectivity to which one feels oneself rooted.

In such cases federalism is the longing for a way of life for retrieval of the community and not merely a commitment to the politics of patterning the state apparatus and the state process in a particular way. Mere legislatic approach to the issue of federalism is outdated.

This presages a great promise and a great danger. The great promise pertains to a movement towards minimal state and a progressively encompassing maximal community as Gandhiji used to advocate. The great danger is that of being stuck up in non-state hegemonies operating from local of global levels, frequently at tandem with one another. Several years ago a publication from Arizona University, USA brought out the fact that the Ford has more income than all the states of the world excepting eighteen. Today concentration of money power and ancillary to that political power of the multinationals might have been further intensified. One has to be careful that one does not jump from the frying pan to the burning cauldron. While the unitary trend of the centre in a plural society with diversities of history, of culture, of resource base is replete with tension and inevitably generates political spur for the devolution of power, one has also to keep in view the totality of the global situation and the geo-political imperatives of the macro-regions like those constituted by the SAARC countries and the ASEAN member-states with which India as a whole and sub-regions within India share many concerns. One of the major concerns is that India and many countries of these macro-regions share a common watershed emanating from the Himalayas and without optimal use of the water resources through mutual cooperation, economics of all these countries cannot fully realise their potential. In the absence of the latter, problems like illegal migration across the border cannot be checked only through administrative action.

Apart from economic factors, for historical reasons also countries of South-East Asia, East Asia, Central Asia and Bangladesh in South Asia are of particular relevance for North-East India.

One aspect of global concern deserves special mention, namely, the ecological aspect. Due to misuse and overuse of the endowments of nature, life on the small planet—the earth—is under threat of extinction. Through international conventions which erode conventional concepts of state sovereignty, pattern of use of the resources by the respective countries is being curbed. At the other end, it is recognised that diversities, particularly

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genetic diversities, hold in them locked up securities for the survival of mankind in the future. It is also becoming more and more obvious that the local communities are the most effective custodians of these biological security bonds of the whole humanity. Their intellectual property rights and institutional arrangements protecting their rights against scientific poaching by various agencies sponsored by the state, or multinationals and other monopolies must receive due consideration, when we talk about federalism or decentralisation of power.

Summing up the foregoing statement of perspective it may be mentioned that federalism is to be envisaged in a continuum of multi-level synthesis starting from the local to the global. Also federalism is to be perceived in the dialectics of state and community. Unless the erosion of the state apparatus at the national, international, regional and local levels harmonises, with the enpowerment of the community (bound together by moral compact) from the local to the global levels, hegemonies of different types will fill up the vacuum. Unitary trends of the state will be replaced by hegemonic impositionss of the monopoly concern in the private sector.

With this statement of perspective the Indian situation and the special features of North-East India will be briefly mentioned.

Rapid Overview of the Indian Situation

India is a meeting point of diverse racial strains and cultural traditions and one finds here the co-existence of different politico-economic formations. While territorial segments in the bulk of India have been linked up with one another at one or the other point of time in history, there were areas, particularly in the North-East, where persistent political linkage with the rest of the country effectively commences from the colonial rule. Pluralism in India is not only social and cultural but also historical and political. At the same time, there is also a sense of overarching shared civilisation and political experience among overwhelming major sections of the population.

In this context both federating and unitary trends are present in India in different degrees of intensity in the different parts of the country and among diverse sections of the population.

Special Features of North-East India

A. The hill areas of Arunachal, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram and Assam played bridge and sometime buffer roles in the long distance trade relations between South, South-East Asia, East Asia and Central Asia. Prior to the colonial period some of these hill areas had only tenuous economic ties and related political arrangements with the kingdoms in the plains and foothills of eastern India. It was only during the British period that they came under effective political control of the colonial rulers.

B. In the bulk of the hill areas communal ownership of the land and land-based resources prevailed. In some parts the community was recognised as a legal person, but the current trend is to diffuse the system through judicial and executive measures. Non-recognition of community rights in the prevailing legal system has been one of the main causes for dispossession and marginalisation of the communities and consequent political turmoil. This has also damaged the moral and political basis of federalism.

C. Non-recognition of the custodial rights of the communities has facilitated large-scale migrations from other parts of the country and even from outside India, disrupting thereby the demographic pattern and the political and socio-cultural processes in the region.

D. Land reforms in the absence of recognition of community rights have in some cases promoted neo-feudalism. Similarly, in some contexts development activities frequently are looked upon as invasion on the prote-political rights of the communities.

E. Linkage of the region with the rest of the country by a narrow strip in North Bengal on the one hand and presence of counterparts of some of the same ethnic formations beyond the political boundaries of India on the other, has posed a number of geopolitical problems.

F. Inadequate communication and productive infrastructure and inequitous resource mobilisation pattern has accentuated regional disparity of the North-East in a negative manner vis-a-vis the rest of the country and has triggered the demand for sustainable development of parts of the region and the region as a whole, with endogenous regulatory mechanism operating at each level.

G. There is considerable transborder exchange of commodities and population through open and not so open channels. Some of the exchanges are sanctified by tradition.

While considering the restructuring of India's polity, these facets of ground reality will have to be kept in view.

Skeletal Outline of Issues of Federalism in India: A Review of the Past

1. Federal polity emerges through two processes:
   (a) Unitary political regime accepting federal structure to satisfy cultural and social aspirations.

(b) Voluntary acceptance of federal polity on geopolitical and historical considerations. In India both the processes have taken place, the second one particularly in the North-East.

2. Starting from the anti-partition struggle in Bengal in 1905, the political mobilisation strategy of the mainstream national leadership in India has accepted the linguistic identity as the basis of delineating political-administrative regimes. It was formulated in 1920 in the organisational structure of the Indian National Congress and was affirmed later in the Nehru Committee Report (1928), Congress Working Committee Resolution (1936), Congress Election Manifesto (1946).

3. On the eve of transfer of power by the British, models of federal arrangements were debated. One of them was the grouping of provinces at one level and participation of the groups at the national level. For understandable reasons it was rejected particularly by the Assamese leadership, but in the changed context one may re-examine the feasibility of such an arrangement.

4. The federal approach at the political realm suffered a setback because of the trauma of partition and Indo-Pak war, immediately after independence. Even then India's Constitution was formally federal with unitary mechanism embedded in the same. Dr Ambedkar stated that while drawing up the Constitution both rigidity and legalism were avoided.

5. While India's Constitution in general is two-tiered at the formal level, in North-East India it is apparently three-tiered because of the operation of the Sixth Schedule. In reality the Sixth Schedule represents more of a political rhetoric than systemic devolution of power and function. The members of the judiciary are not unanimous in their opinion about the institutional import of the Sixth Schedule. Justice Hidayatullah seems to hold the Autonomous District Council as the third-tier. But Justice Hansaria does not agree.

At the operative level substantive limitations of the Sixth Schedule have come out on the surface in recent years. Some of them are as follows: (i) scope of exercise of the Governor's power—whether as the constitutional head of the state he is to be guided by advice of the State Ministry, or whether he can exercise his power based on the resolutions adopted by the Autonomous District Council; (ii) context and condition of the right of supersession of the District Council by the State Government; (iii) whether the District Council Administrates use of land and resources as subsidiary of the State or as a supra-tribal entity; (iv) nature of the State in the disbursement of the share of revenue of the District Council; (v) concurrent jurisdiction of some States even in matters of enactment of customary laws; (vi) right of the State to take over functions like primary education which are inherent functions of the District Council under the provision of the Constitution; (vii) discretionary role of the State in assigning development activities to the District Council.

The recent amendment of the Constitution by recognising many development activities as inherent functions of Panchayati institutions brings out the fact that in these matters the Autonomous District Councils enjoy much less power than even the Panchayats.

The recent Bodoland accord accepting autonomy in the financial management of the Bodoland Council and the right to receive grant-in-aid directly under Article 275 of the Constitution again highlights the handicaps under which the Autonomous District Councils worked all these years. The reported readiness of the Union Government to create a sub-cadre of higher officials within the Bihar cadre for the proposed Jharkhand Autonomous Territory again indicates that the complaints of the Autonomous District Councils about the handicaps that they had to suffer because of the operation of double hierarchy in the bureaucratic structure were not without substance.

There is, however, another side to the Sixth Schedule. On the whole it seems to have served as a social fridge, with little to the credit of the District Council in the matter of democratisation of the polity to serve the interests of the commoners.

(viii) Coming back to the virtual two-tier system that operates in India, it is to be noted that India's federal polity has been influenced considerably by (a) sources of revenue of the Centre and the States which include items to be included in divisible pools and percentage share of the Centre and States in the Central taxes taking into consideration the nature of responsibility at each level; (b) centralising trend in economic planning with the state of India trying to assume the character of a welfare state; (c) ramification of international institutional finance; (e) policies relating to the pricing of public enterprise products; (e) policies relating to public borrowing; (f) scope of Centrally-sponsored schemes; (g) technological imperatives, inter-State river water sharing problem, ecological concerns; (h) coexistence of mega-States and mini-States and unequal exercise of political pressure and pulls which may inhibit the significant role being played by inter-State Councils., (i) possibility of further accentuation of disparity through commercialisation of products which are related to virtually non-monetised subsistence economy and simultaneous liberalisation of the economic regime; (j) cultural homogenisation trend through mass media and through recent tendency of whipping up religious sentiments on the political platform.

Contemporary Issues

Three aspects, namely, fiscal federalism, technological pluralism and cultural pluralism are proposed to be examined in a rapid sweep.

In the context of the so-called liberalisation of the economy from state control several issues like free movement of goods, pricing of services like education, drinking water, irrigation, extension of electric facility in a manner as to cover the cost have come up. It is to be noted that the bulk of the natural resources in the country are concentrated in the tribal areas. While the tribals constitute eight per cent of the population, their habitat constitutes about 20 per cent of the land mass of India. Given their political weakness and ambiguity in the legal status of the resources, free movement of goods would certainly affect them adversely. Similarly given the dispersed nature of their habitats if the services in education, health, agricultural sector are to be made economically viable, most of the tribals will have to forego whatever facility they are enjoying at present. The political cost of these developments will have to be computed.

Technological pluralism has become extremely relevant with the growing realisation that while the tribal and non-tribal rural populations in the North-East and other parts of the country have effective endogenous systems of environmental management, the conservation and resource mobilisation measures prescribed by technocrats mainly based on experiences gained elsewhere, more frequently that not lack R&D support.

The question of cultural pluralism of India's polity has become particularly relevant in North-East India. If one cares to go through the eleven volumes published by the North-East India History Association, one would realise that the diverse cultural linkages of the various ethnic formations are not exhausted batteries of the past; these are highly charged live wires even today. One can play with the same, putting aside the basic tenet of cultural pluralism, only at the cost of India's unity. ■

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Draft Technology Policy Statement 1993: A Critique

A. RAHMAN

The Indian Parliament passed the Scientific Policy Resolution (SPR) in 1958. It was based on a vision of society anchored on India's past, a historical perspective and social and political understanding of developments. Science was to be used for achieving those goals which India had set for herself after independence.

The period in which the SPR was drafted was the euphoric period of science, placing great hopes on the scientific advancements to usher in a new era of human prosperity, by solving the existing problems and those which would arise later.

The Technology Policy Statement (TPS) has been drafted at a time when despite tremendous advances in science and technology, the early euphoria has not only evaporated but a serious questioning of those assumptions on which the earlier conceptual framework was built, is being undertaken. Further, the serious social crisis, leading to terrorism and wars on the one hand and starvation and epidemics on the other, has raised doubts about the development which had taken place so far. The collapse of contemporary societies has added to the problems and heightened the need for rethinking. The Soviet Union and the so-called socialist countries, as Stafford Beer has stated in his presidential address in Delhi, have collapsed and accepted defeat. The Western countries have yet to accept their defeat even though they are faced with a series of crises—economic, social, cultural as well as political, forestalling the shape of events to come. The oligarchies of the few which govern the states, it is now coming out, are based on corruption, greed, lust for power and use of force and spreading state terror to continue their wasteful exploitation of natural resources and suppression of people.

The TPS has neither taken into account these conditions nor the major shift now taking place in the use of existing technologies in the advanced countries. They are tending to reject the old framework of technology with excessive use of energy and material intensive technologies.

In the period of the SPR it was believed that there is no limit to natural resources and that environment can absorb all the waste without being seriously affected by the pollutants discharged. Hence the technologies developed were material and energy-intensive and highly pollutant. However, in the seventies it came to be realised that natural resources—the non-renewable—are limited and cannot sustain growth, if all the countries were to be industrialised. Further, the realisation that these industries were damaging the environment seriously, also emerged. It is now realised that the earth cannot continue to be a sink of technological waste and limits to growth are now linked to environmental and ecological consequences.

The growth in the use of materials and energy in India and other developing countries, is exponential and there is an urgent need for dematerialisation of goods and services. This covers almost every area—use of water, air, oil, minerals, housing materials, forest products, agriculture and other areas. In addition, there is a need to check the pollutants.

There is some talk of recycling, without questioning the premise whether it is environmentally sound. Similarly, there is considerable talk also of sustainable development without realising that there cannot be any sustainable development.

The talk about "globalisation" and India getting into the "mainstream" of international development ignores the basic reality that there cannot be any globalisation based on inequality and uneven development. The so-called "interdependence" of nations would be dependence for the developing countries and independence of the advanced countries, who control the direction of the technological developments.

The author, a well-known scientist, was Founder-Director of the National Institute of Science, Technology and Development Studies (under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research). He is currently the President of the International Science Policy Foundation (Asia Branch).

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THE paper while stressing globalisation also talks of development of indigenous technology based on traditional skills, without realising that the two systems are irreconcilable. The technologies which were developed in India were essentially built around agricultural residues and forest resources; both have become inaccessible as a result of industrialisation of agriculture and large-scale deforestation. These were low energy systems based on small-scale production methods and simple equipment. How uneconomic they have become is evident from the experience of the khadi and village industries. They have survived through subsidies.

The strength of these systems lay in the diffusion of knowledge and technologies on the one hand and the development of human skill to handle material and machines, such as those that existed, very efficiently, on the other. Their lack of development during the British period, and particularly after independence, was due to the lack of interaction of scientists and technologists with artisans and craftsmen. The latter, due to the language barrier and social prejudices, against artisans who are considered lowly and illiterate.

To reach the goal of reducing energy requirements in the production process and decreasing the material inputs, and also in upgrading the artisan craft based technologies, intensive R and D requires to be carried out, and widespread diffusion of knowledge is necessary. So far, there has not been any effort in this direction.

The R and D input to traditional industries is required to be coupled with the development and use of the sophisticated control and monitoring devices. In order to achieve this objective greater emphasis has to be given to the individuals in the system, than merely on institutional structures.

The draft paper mentions the need for changes in infrastructure and management system, without giving any indication of the possible changes envisaged. The infrastructure of science and technology was built partially on the Soviet model. It came to be highly institutionalised and centralised, with abundant state support. One should draw lessons from its failure, as well as from the mindless efforts now being made to make the system market-oriented. The latter has now devastated the entire infrastructure.

In this context of marketing the technological effort, it must be realised that market forces can neither internalise environmental costs nor the cost of wasteful use of natural resources.

One possible result of the R and D system being forced to seek financial support through the market forces would be the non-availability of resources for civil and exploratory research and for the uplift of people, while there would be greater flow of resources of the state for defence and allied areas leading to a military, technological and industrial complex, the beginnings of which are now visible. Over-investment in Defence caused the Soviet collapse and is causing economic crisis in the USA. Those countries, like Japan and Germany, which are spending less on Defence have made rapid economic progress.

The management system of this highly institutionalised and centralised R and D system has become highly bureaucratised. In addition, it has become too rigid in its jurisdictional approach. The result has been the large-scale migration of talented workers and failure in integrating inter-institutional projects. As an example, one does not know what happened to the technology missions launched with so much fanfare.

The worst parts of the management system relate to regional, caste and creed prejudices playing a major role in recruitment and promotions. A cursory look at the staffing of the institutions would reveal the play of these forces. Secondly, a rigid hierarchy is dominant with lack of freedom to workers to express themselves; this has further stifled research and hastened increased migration.

The draft paper talks of technology policy in isolation, without taking into account the social, cultural and political conditions prevailing in the country. The growth of obscurantism, revivalism, increase in violence, intolerance and communal violence are a result of the use of imported technology which has alienated a large number of people and has resulted in uneven development. It has benefited only a small section of the population.

The people having realised that they have been kept out of the gains of the development are revolting. The government, instead of changing the policies and programmes to meet the aspirations of the people, is making major investments in increasing the police and para-military forces to suppress them.

Additionally, the type of technologies developed has strengthened the culture of consumerism, leading to a culture of waste, while the vast majority has been denied the basic needs.

Scientists in their personal capacity were expected to play a major social and cultural role in changing the outlook of the people by helping them in their

(Continued on page 22)

MUSINGS

Untouchables of the Official Media

P.K. RAVINDRANATH

Even as the information explosion sweeps the world and the rapidly advancing technology makes a hash of all efforts to contain its spread, must the media in India continue to be superintended by Ministers blissfully ignorant of the power of the spoken and written word? The debasement and virtual prostitution of the government-owned media in the last two years should make every Indian hang his head in shame.

That such debasement should take place under the very nose of a man reputed to be an intellectual is all the more tragic. The Prime Minister himself holds charge of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, even though it is the Minister of State who runs it. There have been three Ministers in charge of I & B in the two years of the Narasimha Rao Government and all three unfit to be even desk officers in the Ministry, who do the bulk of the work.

The incapacity of the Ministers who have headed the I & B Ministry has led to the emergence of a coterie of bureaucrats who lay down the rules and run the Ministry as their fiefdom. The fact that none of these bureaucrats can even remotely be credited with any expert knowledge of newspapers, films, television or any of the visual arts, makes their dominance in the Ministry all the more dangerous.

Unaware of the potentialities of these media or methods of utilising them to the best advantage of the country or even the government, these bureaucrats merely tighten their stranglehold on various institutions under their charge to perpetuate their own importance or subserve their own interests.

A senior bureaucrat in the I & B Ministry has seen to it that none of the vacancies at the top in Doordarshan, the National Film Development Corporation, Films Division and the Film and Television Institute of India are filled. He operates through the second-in-command of these organisations who are again bureaucrats.

The result is that without proper intellectual or professional orientation, they merely descend to the misuse of the facilities and perks offered by these organisations. For example, the Joint Secretary (Films), sitting in New Delhi, makes lavish use of the Diners' Card, the services of a typist and a chauffeur-driven car, all provided by the NFDC for his own private purposes.

The author, a veteran journalist, was the Press Adviser to the Chief Minister of Maharashtra. He is currently the Director, Nehru Centre, Bombay.

All these perks were withdrawn by the former Chairman of NFDC, D.V. Raju, who was soon eased out of his post. The bureaucrat still enjoys all his perks, drawn from the NFDC, besides his entitlements as an official in the Ministry.

The hold of the bureaucrats is most evident and perhaps the most pernicious in the Films Division, which the Annual Report of the I & B Ministry for 1992-93 proudly declares:

> ...has become one of the largest short-film producing establishments in the world. UNESCO ranked it amongst the foremost with the National Film Board of Canda, the Swedish Film Institute, the French Centre National De la Cinemagraphic and the nationalised Polish Film Industry.

The Films Division records events for posterity. All newsmagazines, documentaries, short films and featurettes produced by it go into the National Film Archives and since all these are shot on Kodak negative film, lasts for several decades. The U-matic film used by Doordarshan, decays and deteriorates in quality within months. Therefore, coverage by the Films Division has special significance.

One of the minor achivements of the pious and devout men lording it over the I & B Ministry has been the canning of 40,000 feet on a *yagna* at Kanchipuram in 1991. The cost of the raw stock that went into the making of this epic film is Rs 10 lakhs, besides the expenses on the crew which took almost all the equipment, cameras and manpower to the Shankaracharya's abode for this exercise. The men at the helm at the I & B Ministry are still undecided on what they should do with the record exposed film. It may be headed for the rich store-house of archival material.

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AN unseen golden chair binds all bureaucrats together. One holding charge of the Films Division, made two documentaries for purposes other than recording the achievements of national figures or institutions. One was on the noted and unquestioned master of Kathak, Birju Maharaj and the other on the St. George Medical College at Lucknow. The FD does not lack documentaries and featurettes on Birju Maharaj, but this latest one (yet to be released) was specifically made to extract a personal favour out of him, by the producer.

The documentary on the Lucknow college focussed on the producer's brother, who was one of the leading lights of that institution.

Recently, the FD made a documentary on the completion of two years in office of the Narasimha Rao Government. The film was as objective as could be expected of the FD. A special screening was arranged for the benefit of the Minister of State, K.P. Singh Deo. As the screening ended, the Minister was seen in deep thought. After several minutes he asked the producer:

> But, where is my leader in all this? How will this help project my leader?

The exasperated producer brought the film back to Bombay and took out all the clips he could get of our erudite Prime Minister, in various moods, poses and occasions and pumped them into his film. Viewers may see the end product on Doordarshan even as they read this article.

The FD, like all the other organisations under the I & B Ministry has been active in stretching out to please the Minister. It has already made three short films on Orissa, where the Congress-I Union Minister has to make a dent in Biju Patnaik's hold over the State.

Doordarshan has been equally active in the last few months, dishing out feature films in Oriya, every second Sunday afternoon, short films on the State, besides the unprecedented live, extensive coverage of the Jagannath Puri car festival. Watching Doordarshan now one could literally say Kali(nga) Yuga has dawned on the country.

Doordarshan and the FD have been considerate and indulgent to Oriya culture, civilisation, history, customs and heritage, but in other respects they have been less than fair to those born in the underprivileged sections of society. For example, it is Manu's writ that decides who should be covered by the FD for posterity.

By a verbal order from a Brahminical bureaucrat in the I & B Ministry, the Vice-President, K.R. Narayanan, is never covered by the FD. He is literally and figuratively an Untouchable. His visits abroad as the nation's Vice-President are not the concern of the FD, for "austerity reasons". Even his significant visit to Cambridge University, where he did the Indian intellectual elite proud, was blacked out by the FD and very cursorily covered by Doordarshan.

In the Hindu pantheon, Lakshminarayanan and Narayanan denote the same deity, but in the official lexicon of the I & B, they are poles apart. One is a twice-born Brahmin, the other an Untouchable. The difference surfaces almost five decades after the Father of the Nation sincerely desired that a Harijan become the Prime Minister of the country. ■

India and Non-Proliferation

INDRANEEL KARLEKAR

While Glavkosmos, the body which coordinates Russia's aerospace industry and represents it in international trading negotiations, has denied any freezing of the transfer of cryogenic rocket technology to India, the US Government has made it clear that this deal has been cancelled as it violates the provisions of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR).

The significance of this cancellation goes beyond its adverse effect on the development of India's geosynchronous satelite launch vehicle (GSLV), which was planned to be launched in 1995-96. It also suggests that pressure on India to sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty will increase. This impression is reinforced by a recent report in the *Time* magazine which indicates the new American Government's desire to further strengthen controls on proliferation. To do so, it has recommended certain measures:

a) shifting the attention of COCOM, the Paris based committee which formerly controlled exports to communist countries, to focus on exports which would help states develop weapons of mass destruction;
b) banning the production of fissile material for the construction of bombs;
c) tightening international agreements on missile technology; and
d) initiating new regional attempts to persuade proliferating countries that weapons of mass destruction are not needed for their security.

Proponents of the Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB) in the US have recently woken up to the fact that it can be used as a step against non-

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proliferation. In the current scenario a CTB will not make a great difference. The logic behind the CTB was that by prohibiting the testing of nuclear weapons it would halt an arms race between the US and the Soviet Union. With the collapse of the USSR the context of the CTB has become outdated. But the concern over proliferation continues, and is understandable in the post-Cold War era. The newly independent states of the former Soviet Union provide a good example of the dangers of proliferation. The presence of nuclear weapons in Ukraine and the Central Asian states have become a controversial and dangerous issue in world politics. Ukraine, as of this moment, posseses the world's third largest nuclear arsenal. A rough estimate puts the number of its weapons at 176 strategic missiles, 30 bombers and over 16,000 warheads—enough to eliminate life on this planet several times over. It is significant that Ukraine has not committed itself to the complete destruction of its nuclear weapons. Some Ukrainian strategists believe that a few nuclear weapons should be retained as a deterrent against ultra-nationalist Russian intentions. In a crisis situation, Ukraine may even use its nuclear warhead. Whatever sense of security the West has will be totally shattered if Ukraine manages to break the secret code (which is controlled by Russia as of now) and gain full control over its weapons—something, according to many experts, they are very close to doing.

With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian state of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan managed to retain their nuclear weapons. Kazakhstan, with the largest arsenal, has shown a willingness to sign the NPT and destroy all nuclear weapons by 2000. Members of the CIS undertook to respect the obligations of the former Soviet Union and follow a multilateral policy towards disarmament at an agreement signed at Minsk in December 1991. This was followed by the four members of the nuclear club of Central Asia signing the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) on May 22, 1992 as a preliminary to the ratification of the START signed between the Soviet Union and the US in July 1991. What remains to be seen is whether their action matches their commitments.

The proliferation of well-funded and sophisticated terrorist groups worldwide has lent a certain urgency to the question of the future of the nuclear stockpile in Central Asia. The West has expressed serious concern about these weapons falling into the hands of Islamic fundamentalists. This is an understandable fear. But not all terrorists are Islamic, and if a free-market situation arises, the seller would usually go to the highest bidder irrespective of religious affiliations. The unknown quantity here is the depth of the brotherhood of Islam. The situation will change qualitatively, if Pan-Islamism can stake a superior claim to the nuclear states of Central Asia. The issue, however, remains essentially the same, that is, the danger of nuclear weapons falling into the wrong hands—be it Leftist or Right-wing, Islamic or non-Islamic.

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WHILE India fully believes in the importance of non-proliferation, it hesitates to sign the NPT as the latter does not appear to be an effective guarantee against proliferation. A case in study is North Korea. This country while signing the NPT in 1985 managed to stall inspection of any of its sites by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) till last year. These checks too, North Korea insisted, were unnecessary as its sites are supposedly engaged in purely civilian nuclear power industry. However, there are clear indications that North Korea will continue developing its nuclear programme under Kim Jong Il, the probable successor to his father, Kim Il Sung.

Its intentions were made clearer by its withdrawal earlier this year from the NPT. According to reports, North Korea possesses enough material to make at least one bomb. Recently a new missile, the Nodong 1, with a 1000 kilometre range was successfully test fired. US intelligence reports have already indicated North Korea as a major supplier of missiles to developing countries. June 1993 saw North Korea revise its belligerent posture by 'suspending' its withdrawal from the pact. In a new development at Geneva, North Korea and the US have announced a compromise aimed at diffusing tension between the two nations. Yet the deal does not provide the guarantee the Clinton Government desires—that North Korea will open all its nuclear facilities to international scrutiny. In fact weapons specialists argue that this retreat is most likely to be temporary and that the agreement leaves North Korea free to continue its weapons development programme while feigning adherence to IAEA regulations.

The NPT is unfair and unequal, because besides the established nuclear powers, it would leave North Korea and others on the nuclear threshold in possession of nuclear weapons. In fact the US

Government itself is getting ready to resume testing nuclear weapons once a nine-month moratorium imposed by the Congress ends in June. Under this plan, the US will set off underground blasts to ensure that their weapons remain safe and in working order. The Congress also stipulated that all nuclear testing should cease after September 1996, as the US negotiated a multilateral test ban. The Clinton Administration has decided to ignore Congress warnings and continue testing nuclear devices of one kiloton or less after September 1996. While this not only raises questions about America's credibility, it also encourages threshold countries to go nuclear.

Apart from the question of principle involved in India's refusal to sign an unequal treaty like the NPT which it has adhered to since 1967, this country can hardly forgo the nuclear option given its security compulsions. The threat which Pakistan and China pose to India should not be taken lightly. With the former there have already been three wars. Pakistan is now actively waging a low-intensity war against this country. Reports also confirm that Pakistan is developing the 600 kilometre range Hatf-3 missile based on the Chinese M-9 missile technology which can target Delhi. With China India has a history of border conflicts. US intelligence reports have confirmed that China has been passing M-11 missile technology to Pakistan. In May 1992, the Chinese exploded a megaton device following it with another test in September 1992. Although in a recent move the US Government has warned China against passing missile technology to developing nations, China is not in a mood to pay serious heed to it. In fact it has protested and has said that the 'US side should stop making an issue of it'. China can hardly be blamed for not taking the US warning seriously as it has already received the most favoured nation position in trade relations. India, therefore, cannot take Washington DC's ability to restrain China for granted.

India cannot also be singled out for opposing the NPT. China, Brazil, Argentina, Pakistan, South Africa and Israel have all opposed the NPT. It is only in recent years that China, France and South Africa have signed the Treaty. This is because when the US, USSR and UK formulated the NPT in 1967, they divided the world into two groups: one group recognised as nuclear weapon powers, while the other comprising the rest of the world which were forbidden from developing nuclear weapons. Therefore, countries which had conducted nuclear tests before 1967 were given legitimacy as nuclear powers. Hence China which had exploded a device before 1967, joined the Treaty as a nuclear power. It has to be emphasised that since the late 1950s, much before the conception of a NPT, Jawaharlal Nehru had already been campaigning for a ban on nuclear tests. Also important is the fact that India's nuclear energy programme has been from its inception geared towards peaceful uses. The 1970s and 1980s saw the CTB occupy a important position in the Indian arms control. Efforts were also made to reinforce a ban on tests by a group consisting of India, Sweden, Mexico, Argentina, Greece and Tanzania. India's proneness to view Washington's assurances with certain skepticism has a historical background. Despite repeated US guarantees in the fifties and early sixties, that military hardware given as aid to Pakistan under the SEATO and CENTO, of which the latter was a member, would not be used against India, it was used in 1965 as well as in 1971. India's faith has been further shaken by the American Government's recent decision of taking Pakistan off the list of countries under watch for involvement in terrorism. This is when Pakistan's involvement in the promotion of terrorism in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir is common knowledge.

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To reassure India the US Government must:

a) use all levers of pressure at its disposal to persuade Islamabad to give up its nuclear and missile programme;
b) dub Pakistan a terrorist state and put it under severe pressure to give up its low-intensity war against India;
c) exert severe pressure on China to abstain from passing missile technology, and ultimately force it to do so;
d) force China to give up testing military nuclear devices.

Even then India will continue to have reservations about signing the NPT as long as some nations have large nuclear arsenals, and others continue clandestine efforts to manufacture nuclear weapons without being any the worse for it. To ensure a nuclear free world, the move must be towards total nuclear disarmament. The Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan on disarmament placed before the UN in 1988 asked for global elimination of nuclear weapons by AD 2010. This can be a starting point for framing a programme meant to achieve this end. The nuclear powers should cease not only testing their weapons, but commit themselves to the neutralisation of their nuclear arsenals within a specified time-frame. Till such a move is agreed upon by the world nuclear powers, India will have no alternative but to keep its nuclear option open. ■

Hindu-Muslim Problem: A Cooperative Approach

UROOJ ABDI and M.G. HUSAIN

Since India is a country of different religions, caste, creed and cultural or ethnic minorities, her progress would be impeded if communal harmony is not maintained. The terrible records of communal riots during the last decade has shaken the very foundations of our Republic. Some suggestions are offered below to restore confidence in the minds of minorities and weaker sections against the onslaught of communal and anti-social elements.

An open mind and accommodative approach are basic prerequisites for their playing a positive role in intercommunal relations. The Hindus should realise that the progress of the country is possible only when there is a healthy relationship and a cooperative spirit between the majority and the minority. They should show more consideration and respect for the Muslim minority's cultural and religious sensibilities since culture is often common between the majority and the minority especially at regional levels. Minorities, as a rule, tend to be more sensitive on such issues.

On the other hand, Muslims should also realise that the indigenous elements in their identity content are very important and should not be de-emphasised. In fact, no Muslim community in this world is a 'pure Islamic country'. A 'pure Islamic country', anthropologically speaking, is a mythical category. Nor should Muslims make their identities merely past-oriented. If they want their life to be more meaningful in the contemporary world, the present and future must enter effectively into their identity consciousness. They should thus opt for a progressive and not a regressive identity. For that they must change and shake off their feudal past. The Muslims have imbibed feudal values so deeply that they cannot shake themselves free of them. But it will have to be done. Islam has very little in common with feudalism. In accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, the activities of the anti-democratic and anti-secular parties should be curbed. Politics should not be allowed to mix with religion.

Communal fire spreads with all the fury due to communalised and biased reporting of the press and the government media. Editors and proprietors of the yellow press should be dealt with by making use of Section 153 and 153A of the Indian Penal Code.

Adequate representation of minorities and weaker sections must be ensured in the reorganisation of the police force. Para-military forces must be reorganised and reoriented so as to free them of communalism and parochialism. Punitive action should be taken against those police personnel who take sides or are partial during communal riots.

The local administration must be instructed to act promptly and impartially at the beginning of communal riots. Intelligence agencies should be geared to nab the culprits red-handed.

Instead of long-drawn commissions of inquiry whose reports gather dust long after their submissions to the government, special courts may be instituted to administer justice to the riot victims.

The role of musclemen and mafia gangs cannot be ignored in the recent riots in India. The government may frame laws to confiscate the property or freeze bank accounts of parties found guilty of financing communal outfits.

These are some tentative suggestions for developing a cooperative approach between Hindus and Muslims. It is easier said than done. After all, we are engaged in the process of nation-building. In Europe, the process was comparatively simple. There societies are based on one religion and language and the process of industrialisation has been rather pervasive and advanced. Ours is a multilingual and multi-religious society and industrialisation is proceeding at a slow pace. We are far from modernised. However, let us not be disheartened. Great challenges require great determination. We should go about the task with equanimity and sincere commitment. ■

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BOOK REVIEW

A Movement with a Difference

PRIYA PRAKASH

The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) is a movement for support programmes for poor women. SEWA has a membership of over 46,000 women representing around 33 trades, who joined Ela Bhatt's work, dedicating their individual skills to facilitate, interfacing the formal and informal worlds. The majority of SEWA's organisers are working class women themselves. Amongst them, those endowed with leadership qualifications are helping to represent their trade in the unions, and others who are literate and professional are able to develop understanding first-hand to forge bridges with their less advantaged sisters.

SEWA's ideology is that women representing all levels of society should join "to plan with", rather than "planning for" the poor women. The strength of an organisation is in its membership, to generate understanding and ideas which the middle class women can help convey to the community. Lawyers, doctors, and entrepreneurs in business, who believe in this work, come to learn from the self-employed, the context of their problem. Thereby they provide their services; in turn they also pass on their skills to the poor women. The idea is that they hold hands, in mutual respect, while they shift controls. With this ideology 60 women are learning to prepare and represent their own legal cases. Artisans have grown from exploited piece-rate workers' status to the position of partners in their own cooperatives. After acquiring experience and skills, some of the women have also risen as managers of cooperatives. SEWA has seen that when women assume management positions, policy change becomes a realilty. In the union work too when workers themselves present their demands with conviction, their voice is heard.

Where Women are Leaders: The Sewa Movement in India by Kalima Rose; Vistaar Publications, New Delhi; 1992; Price : Rs 225.

In this journey SEWA has travelled 20 years on the course of building data base and the experience of self-employed women in Gujarat, which increasingly convinced Ela Bhatt that there are many common strains that bind women belonging to different religions, castes and States in India and other parts of the world. Likewise, women in other places, though economically active, have remained poor, marginalised, unprotected and invisible as the workers in Gujarat. This needs to be understood if the lot of the underprivileged home-workers and unorganised self-employed is to improve.

The labour unions in the West were lobbying against "put out work into worker's home". SEWA's home-based workers brought to their notice that the centralised, industrial workplace does not and would never suit the needs of the poor people. SEWA began demanding the self-employed work to be legitimised and protected at home. The International Labour Union (ILO) and International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), which represents 96 million workers and has affiliating organisations in 81 countries, responded to SEWA's demand, and initiated an ILO Convention (1990) for recognition and protection of home-based workers.

SEWA has not adopted the philosophy of a "giver" in social work. The approach is that of listening, and thus reach the understanding of the problems of the self-employed. And, through the traditional approach, SEWA stands by the struggles for a little space; which literally means a place on the pavement for vegetable vendrs and women hawkers who continue to sell their goods at the same spot, for three or more generations. These vendors ask for nothing except their right to ply in the streets a small hand cart or squat on the market pavement with their two baskets. Since they are not officially allotted space, or given licences, they are labelled 'encroachers', and harassed by petty officials as well as the police. Their goods are confiscated, they are beaten up and bribe extorted from them to let them sit unharassed for a day or two and the process goes on. SEWA approached the municipal authorities and requested that they be allotted space for their daily business, and issued licence as recognised hawkers. They approached the police to take action against recalcitrant policemen of the beat, but to no avail. Thereafter SEWA decided to take their cases to the Supreme Court. Finally they succeeded in getting a ruling in favour of women hawkers, who now sit with the security of licence and refuse to pay fine.

SEWA is now lobbying for a National Policy on Hawkers and Vendors in Parliament, so that a legislation could finally give legitimacy to the traditional indigenous way of trading by providing licenses, vending space and other facilities in the urban and rural markets. SEWA is constantly challenging the relic of colonial and Western influence which marginalised the Indian way of life and work, and demand that society at large also examine its priorities. SEWA has worked towards a combination of modern technologies with traditional life-styles to suit the women in India.

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ELABEN BHATT, a lawyer and a Gandhian in her approach, joined the trade union movement under the inspiration of Smt Annsuyaben who was directed by Mahatma Gandhi to fight for the cause of workers in the textile mills in Ahmedabad which was owned by her brother. Thus the Textile Mills Trade Union of Ahmedabad (TLA) was set up with the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi as the first trade union in India.

The Textile Mills Trade Union of Ahmedabad helped the workers to gain several facilities. this inspired some of the women who used to carry textiles in a cartload or even headloads to the markets, to ask the question: "What about us? Can we get any of these facilities and benefits?" They were directed to Ela Bhatt, head of the women's wing of TLA. Ela Bhatt had been dealing with labour issues for 14 years, through the jobs with TLA and the Labour Ministry of the Gujarat Government. She was constantly exposed to the realities of the poor working class, and the numerous problems of the unorganised workers in India.

When these self-employed women approached her she was ready to hear their questions. She responded with an idea she had been formulating for many years: "You need to organise yourselves if you want to get some of these benefits." About two dozen women came together, pooled in a few paise and took the decision to demand that their wages be regularised. Soon used-clothes sellers, vegetable vendors wanted to join the union, for protection from police brutality and extortion. Then home-bound women in the Muslim community, who stitch textile waste into garments and quilt covers, requested for some support. Agricultural workers came to these meetings to discuss how they could actually get the minimum wage that was their due, under the law. Carpenters and metal smithing women came seeking access to small loans for working capital. The exploitation of the bidi workers and incense-makers brought them into the fold of the union. Women who had migrated to the city for textile mill jobs, but were retrenched, were usually reduced to picking recyclable waste from the city's garbage dumps. They had several ideas of how to alter their circumstances. They came to the union for services and support. Weavers, basket-makers and block-printers—all facing displacement of their skills or loss of raw material or markets—came seeking help to hold on to the only occupation they knew. Women who had been victimised for asking for legal wages in the tobacco processing plant came seeking legal assistance.

In this way SEWA grew, organically, slowly absorbing more and more trades, rooting itself in the reality of poor working women. The spirit and diversity of SEWA represented women across religions and castes, difficult to assemble at one place or to come by anywhere else: tribals, Hindu, Harijan, migrant and Muslim women; tattooed Vaghari women; sinewed, muscular smiths and young nimble girl bidi-rollers with their mothers and grandmothers, thin and bent with years of sitting over their rolling work, timidly emerging from home bound communities—all in different dresses, speaking different dialects, were coming together to generate strength. They were an amazing convergence to witness.

SEWA's choice of the term 'self-employed' to define this large sector of workers, was consciously adopted to give the working women a positive status, to people who are often described negatively as "informal", "un-organised", "marginal" or "peripheral". Elaben says: "How can the self-employed workers—who make up for 55 per cent of Ahmedabad's work force, 50 per cent of Calcutta's and Bombay's work force—be considered marginal? Or how could the majority of rural women who are engaged in the food production of the country be considered peripheral?" According to the SEWA estimates, women account for at least 60 per cent of the self-employed population, whereas only six per cent are recorded as employed.

SEWA has found that the only way to bring change in the lives of the self-employed is to "organise, organise and organise some more". "In numbers women find their voice and strength.

When they stand in sufficient numbers, their voices do shake the balance in their favour; from the tactics of their neighbourhood traders or the landowners who give them work, upto the national and international policies." SEWA could not create more work as the women demanded, but it helped them in getting them fair wages, training, skills and often an alternative source of income to improve their staying capacity. Their being unlettered did not deter SEWA trainers in the technology transfer. They developed informal training methods in an innovative style to communicate, and even transact the banking business, transfer sophisticated technologies like operating and managing the Village Video Network. Lila Datania, a vegetable vendor, and others were trained by an enthusiastic Martha Stuard and VVN is being used as an effective instrument of training and extension.

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SEWA's own struggle was also running through rough weather when it got engulfed in an internal conflict with its affiliating organisation, TLA. SEWA had now earned a prominent place in the women's movement and was recognised by international organisations like the ILO and Women's World Banking. The TLA leaders started objecting to Ela's work in SEWA. They bitterly criticised her frequent trips abroad and her successes in the national and international forums. The SEWA organisers trace the root of this displeasure of the TLA leaders to the time of reception of Asia's prestigious Magsaysay Award 1977 to Ela Bhatt for the Gandhian principles of self-help among the depressed work force of self-employed women. Twenty years as the leader of SEWA reaffirmed her belief that the future of India lies in self-employment and empowerment of the poor women. However, the TLA leadersip felt that since SEWA was an affiliated organisation and Buch was the President of SEWA, they should have been the recipients of the credit. Covert criticism started that she was neglecting her duties as the incharge of the TLA women's wing and sewing classes, that advancing credit and building alternative economic structure were not considered union work, etc. etc.

In 1981 serious caste and communal riots broke out in Ahmedabad, and the city was engulfed in violence over the issue of reservation for Harijans in the admissions for medical colleges. The city was under curfew for over three months. In demonstrations and destructions over 40 people were killed. TLA decided not to speak on the issue, because they had a common leadership with the National Labour Organisation whose members were mostly middle class and white-collar workers, in sympathy with the agitating students. SEWA's membership, self-employed women, represented all sections of society but due to disturbed conditions they were suffering the most. Ela Bhatt called upon TLA to speak in favour of reservation for Harijans. She cited TLA's commitment to Gandhian principles and reminded the TLA leadership of Gandhiji's agitations to remove untouchability. Both TLA's and SEWA's members were from communities that benefit from reservations. But the TLA leaders decided to keep quiet. The SEWA Executive therefore passed a resolution to that effect and released it to the press. Later at a meeting called by the Chief Minister of the Gujarat State, only Ela Bhatt spoke in favour of reservations. She bitterly spoke of the plight of daily workers whose families were suffering due to hunger and deprivation. The women needed the markets to be normal and safety in the streets to carry on their work. But with continuous curfew things were bad. She said: "The real problem is medical care. Even today, the umbilical cord is cut with sickle that is not even sterilised in fire, we have not even put a proper knife in the hands of the village mid-wife. This is the condition in the country and you are fighting for your few seats, your grants, it is so irrelevant! The reservation must stay." As expected she was quoted profusely in the press. With that hell broke loose. Her house was stoned for several nights. She recalled: "But, now I understand those sleepless nights, surrounded by fear... that terror of lying in darkness and feeling the fear of stones from unknown... and an unidentified mass anger."

Ela Bhatt was charged by the TLA leadership for indiscipline for speaking in favour of reservations in public. A month later when Ela Bhatt was away to attend a meeting of Women's World Banking in San Remo she was expelled from the honorary membership of TLA. The leaders of TLA decided to boycott SEWA and resigned from the Executive of SEWA and the TLA deposit in SEWA of Rs 300,000 was withdrawn from the SEWA Bank. SEWA was served with a notice to vacate their premises and their telephone was disconnected.

The meeting of the General Council of the National Labour Organisation, a Gujarat federation of 36 unions, was to be held shortly thereafter.

SEWA was not to be represented there as Buch, a TLA leader, who was also the President of SEWA, had resigned. SEWA still decided to bring a group of 25 delegates as observers to this meeting of the Council as they also apprehended some undemocratic action against them at the meeting. The SEWA delegates were granted permission to enter the chamber, but when they raised issues relating to self-employed women, they were jeered at. One TLA delegate provoked laughter from the Council by asking: "How can we demand for bathroom and latrine when they work at home." Following this, the TLA members became verbally aggressive, and the SEWA delegates were asked to leave. While they were standing outside, a two-line resolution expelling SEWA from the federation was passed, with not much ado.

This episode left Ela Bhatt stunned. She said: "I considered these people my mentors, I respected them like parents who had groomed me in the union work." She heard Buch quoting a proverb: "A golden dagger is to be worn for decoration, but not for killing yourself... I build a wall of poor women around us to protect us from Indiraji's attack, but now that the Emergency is over, we no longer need them." They heard this and felt terribly insulted and then they grew very angry at the thought of having been 'used' in such a brutal manner.

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THREE days after the NLO meeting, SEWA called a solidarity meeting of its members at Akhandanand Hall. Loudspeakers had to be put outside the hall as all the members could not be accommodated inside. Every one of the delegates from SEWA who had attended the NLO Council meeting spoke with courage and indignation about what they had heard and seen. Both the leaders and working-class women took turns in speaking with assertiveness. Ela Bhatt recalls that she was feeling like Draupadi in that NLO meeting from which SEWA was heckled out. Her elders and mentors in the trade union work standing by watching as she and her colleagues were publicly humiliated. She says: "I felt that it was like I was stripped in front of the people I had respected most, with no one speaking up for me." This also depicts the vulnerability that is characteristic of the position of women who enter public life. But like the analogy, she too rose powerfully from that situation, through her inherent strength, and solidarity of its members, and organisation that rallied to combat TLA's attempts to break the women's union.

Subsequently a similar experience was voiced by Madhu Kishwar, who observed: "In most cases, the leadership begins to make special appeal to women to join when the movement is facing a crisis or a backlash from oppresive forces. At such times, the leaders call on women more easily, because the community is compelled to suspend the normal rules of behaviour, in order to cope with the emergency, and men become more willing to encourage women's participation." The comment implies that women are not willing to be treated as partners of convenience. SEWA's women show that as members of an organisation, they acquire self-confidence, access to resources, visibility, empowerment and leadership. SEWA provided the motivation to the unlettered, working women to learn skills that improve their economic status, ability to fight for their rights, and usher in an alternate economic structure.

SEWA promoted innovative, informal training programmes and attracted a number of highly qualified, professional and skilled persons, experimented with the informal method of education. Martha Stuard, a communciation expert from Martha Stuard Communications, New York decided to help in training some of these women, to teach them the art of video-film production, development and editing, etc. This programme is supported by the United Nations University, Tokyo. Now SEWA has a Village Video Network that is regularly utilised for awareness programmes and group discussions.

Ms Kalima Rose describes the work of SEWA in simple real life experiences of its members, and their leader, Ela Bhatt. The descriptions in the book are live with images of inner feelings and emotions. ■

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day-to-day life. Instead, they have fallen prey to obscurantism. It is no wonder that pictures of various gods and goddesses are displayed in scientific institutions and workplaces of scientists, and pujas are performed in the institutions.

Judging the draft policy paper as a whole it appears to be a summary of various statements made by Ministers/Ministries from time to time. Maybe after it is launched with much fanfare, it would be forgotten as the earlier Technology Policy Statement was. ■

Taslima Nasreen

MODHUMITA MOJUMDAR

Taslima Nasreen is probably the first Bangladeshi columnist to get the prestigous Ananda Purashkar—an award for outstanding works in Bengali instituted by the Ananda Bazar group of publications of Calcutta. Born August 25, 1962, in Mymensingh on the banks of the Brahmaputra, she is a medical doctor in government employment; currently posted in Dhaka. Travelling is her hobby, and her first anthology of poems appeared in 1989. After that there have been many more books of poetry, but she did not win the Ananda award for her poems but for her book, *Nirbachita Column* (Selections from Columns)—for she has been writing for various journals for several years now on issues pertaining to women. We, in India, consider Bangladesh as a country far more backward than ours. But it takes rare courage and frankness to analyse the women's issues in the manner she has done in her columns—and also rare boldness on the part of the newspapers and journals which have been publishing her writings. It is not that she just writes about man-woman relationships, she also does not spare religion and religious edicts which sanction the subjugation of women—both things that the Indian press has always shied away from.

In one of her columns, she says:

> The other day, while about to step into a graveyard, I saw a signbord which said: 'Women not allowed to enter.' I had thought that such places prevented the entry of cattle and goats (to preserve the sanctity of the place). Now, it seems that women are also prevented entry. Possibly all the ban orders are applicable to animals and women.
>
> Death alone can give woman the right to enter a graveyard. Then, is it true that death alone can provide deliverence to the woman?
>
> Twice the political leaders and Islamic fundamentalists cried for my blood. The first was when I issued a statement in support of Salman Rushdie for his freedom to write *Satanic Verses*. The second was when I wrote against the *purdah* system for women. They had issued a statement in national dailies saying that killing me was desirable from the point of view of religion.

Nasreen does not belong to any political party or group. She knows that she might be killed in the name of religion any day. But she is courageously fighting her lone battle against the greatest of odds. I have not been able to verify it, but I heard in Calcutta recently that the only reason that Muslim fundamentalists of Bangladesh dare not lay their hands on her is because among those appreciative of her bold stance are some young persons who have vowed to take revenge on anybody who dares harm her physically. Among the people she admires are Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar and Lenin, for their efforts to end the slavery of women and to give them the status of human beings, equality and a kind of respect that they had been denied (and are still denied) as playthings for men.

Grass that grows under a slab of stone never becomes green and vibrant. Men of religion (and Nasreen does not distinguish between one religion and the other) similarly try to suppress women. Capitalists try a different technique—they flatter women for their beautiful body, they tie them up with chains of gold. The chain is omnipresent in this male-dominated world. The husband buys his wife trinkets, a *sari*, or hands her the ownership deed of a plot of land. Even the liberated man tells his fiance that, after marriage "I will give you freedom"—as though freedom is not her birthright.

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PLATO, Nasreen points out, did not differentiate between slaves and women. She quotes Florence Nightingale as saying that Christianity has given nothing to women. Her quotations are all substantiated and it appears that Nasreen has made a thorough study of the scriptures of all major religions. After defeating Ravan, Ram tells Sita that she is free. That he had fought the war to uphold his family honour, not for her sake. That he could not accept her because she was like the *ghee* that had been licked by a dog. Even the scoundrel, Ravan, had not been as unfair to Sita as Ram who had forced her to go through repeated fire ordeals, without even bothering to find out from her whether she had been raped by Ravan. Nasreen quotes the *Vashishtha Dharmasutra* as saying that before marriage a female will be under the tutelage and protection of her father, in her youth she will be under her husband's protection, and in her old age under the thumb of her son. In no stage of life is she worthy of independent existence.

She quotes from the Quran and the Hadith to point out how Allah himself and the Prophet of Islam had discriminated against women. According to Hazarat Muhammad, a man can beat his wife for four reasons: (1) If the husband asks his wife to dress up and come to him and she does not oblige; (ii) if the husband orders her to come to him for the purpose of sexual intercourse and she refuses; (3) if the wife refuses to bathe and perform *namaz;* and (4) if the wife visits somebody else's home without the permission of her husband. The Hadith also says that it is a virtuous wife's duty not to feel jealous when her husband takes on a second wife.

Nasreen tells women that "they" have created religion in Jerusalem, the Himalayas and Mount Hera. "They" have declared this religion as sacrosanct. In the name of this sanctity they have dumped you in slush. They are giving you a place under their feet, "they" are sending you to the kitchen, "they" are making you dress up, "they" are lifting you to the bed, "they" are casting you away from that bed. "They" are covering you, when necessary "they" are removing your cover. "They" are kicking you, beating you. "They" are not human beings. "They" are men.

As we find in India, in Bangladesh too, says Nasreen, there are Communists who talk big about the equality of the sexes but keep their wives confined to the kitchen, happy with her stove and utensils. On the other hand, women are compared to flowers. Flowers that are delicate, perfumed and of varied hues. Flowers which are meant to be smelt by men. Flowers whose petals are torn off and crushed one by one by men. No man is ever compared to a flower. For they are meant to be strong and masterly. It is the flower that has never been smelt by another man that the man wants. On the wedding night, his gift to her is syphilis. Their lechery, even their acts of rape are not condemned. It is the woman who is supposed to remain chaste and bears the stigma of having been raped.

Elderly men sometimes develop enlargement of their prostrate glands which increases their craving for the sexual act. They then marry—not middle-aged women, but young girls. Soon, the disease leaves them impotent, and it is the young wife who has to live with it all. Even without the enlarged prostrate gland, one finds old men marrying virgins of a tender age.

There is no aspect of the troubles faced by girls and women, especially in the sexual context, that Taslima Nasreen does not dissect with skill in her columns. One wonders why there are no Taslima Nasreens in India. Perhaps there are women as bold and frank, but which newspaper or journal in India would allow them to campaign in the same fashion against the subjugation of the Second Sex? ■

IMPRESSIONS

Socialism and Immortality

ROHAN D'SOUZA

In *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich,* Solzenitsyn's character Ivan is asked if he believes in God. The question from a fellow-mate in a Siberian prison camp plunges into his heart and evokes the answer: "Yes I do but I don't believe in heaven or hell."

My attempt to draw this analogy to explain communism is not irony. Communism—the riddle of history solved, a classless society located at the end of a spiralling five stage movement—has died in its most tangible aspirations. Only to be immediately resurrected as an act of faith. The Communist Party(ies)—the institution that sprang on the surface of a core comprising Marxism and Leninism—has now been orphaned of a heaven at the end of its teleology. Since there is no longer "communism" at the culmination of its sorrow and struggle, it languishes bereft of reward. What is inconclusive is a winding path that often loops and forgets itself turning blind corners and emerges appropriated hence without hell, without punishment. In the words of Gramsci (ironically enough stated at a different historical juncture): "The old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum there arise a diversity of morbid symptoms."

The Communist Party (ies) as the highest organisation of the political consciousness of the working class, armed with reason, bearing the strength of its bureaucratic rationality and the substance and vigour of its objectivity now hurls itself onto Quixote's windmills because it cannot promise deliverance. Its every gesticulation affirms its ideological anachronism. Its cadres live with desire but without hope. Having worsted itself against capitalism it now awaits passive and pensive to be appropriated by a language ostensibly neutral and above systems. An order that argues for efficiency, production and a standard of living. Having tangled itself thus it drops its gaze unto its own mask. After all, what did millions of working class stomachs argue for but the unleashing of the forces of production from decay. Emancipation in its finest sense is an economic conundrum dissolved of its anxiety. Where hierarchy, discipline and secrecy in the iron grip of science having emasculated its enemies would upturn the tables on hunger and poverty with a benign Polit-Bureau watching in paternal satisfaction. The Soviet Union lived with the objective truth for 70 years. Until the collective wisdom arrived at by majority vote began to waver and finally unhinged. It now has many truths and truths about truths. The linearity of time, conceived as dogged progress, has shattered into a million fragments. Each being lodged in a different layer of consciousness drawing from its own depths its varied traditions, an enormous recall of memory burning in new contexts. Decades compressed under the weight of categories and concepts enforcing uniform equilibriums now unburdened and exploding in wild anarchy.

But Marx on the alter of history cannot be crucified. He is not merely a genius within the enlightenment project; he is, above all, a victim of modernity. Perhaps the extraction of surplus value can be written off as another narrative to be decentred but his weighty reflections on alienation are yet to be explored for its radical potential. By rendering death a biological fact science has turned man into a hedonist. Just as death made life purposeless, scientific objectivity rendered him amoral. Scientific socialism did not address man in his inner essences. It turned him into the ephemeral creature of time. Having no beyond it gave him history and an immediate presence that established him in a material constellation following the rhythms of concrete and metal. Alienation is that high religion against modernity explaining this sense of loss. Religion as the profoundest metaphor that organises human experience is the great solace bearing the magic and mystery of life. In its positive charge it holds the key to unlocking the vital original energies of civilisation. Marxism as a doctrinaire reading by the Communist Party (ies) must now abandon the enlightenment project, disband its reason to cast itself under the new sun of the beyond. It must inspire its heaven by the grand claim to immortality. A longing as ancient as Gilgamesh and the Pharaohs.

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HAVING exhausted itself in trying to rationalise the greed of modernity Marxist praxis in the immediate politics must take a deeper philosophical turn. The Communist Party (ies) cannot continue to contest power only amongst the corridors and echelons of the state's apparatuses. Time and again it has ended in the ugliest consequence: total appropriation. Its sweep must now include the varied and diverse battles outside the electoral processes fought for livelihood, justice and especially a humane sanity. It must eat into the vitals of the state by sapping its foundations in society. Institutions like the bureaucracy, education, the army, hospitals must be subverted at the heart of their venom. In a word, the everyday structures and circumatances of life must be prevented from breeding hate, greed and oppression.

It must understand that the most substantial crisis of our times is the ongoing ecological devastation. Which above its obvious destruction of habitat and sustenance is the essential collapse of a fundamental relationship. The waters and dust of millenniums have communicated truths opening the pulse of the universe to the vision of man. What will be lost is this dialogue. Having thus turned deaf we turn upon nature arranging for a joint suicide. Deforestation, damming of rivers, nuclear pollution and so on are but thousands of stabs that hollow out, disconnect and obliterate meanings and threads of existences that drew out and established humanity in its aesthetic ecstacy. If we persist in hacking away at these roots which drank from those veins of inspiration, 'man will die from a great loneliness of spirit'.

Marxism in its predominant praxis must be rescued from economism. It must not see the working class only as a sea of stomachs. In Marx's concept of alienation lies the yet untapped richness of powerful metaphors that can rekindle mystery and a sense of immortality in man. Socialism must ask its defenders to renew their ties with the voices of nature. Political economy must be rooted in a grander scheme defying biological death. We cannot ignore great cycles of time which are twitching in our blood carrying in the atoms of our genetic codes the signals of an original and intimate relationship with clay, water, sun and the dazzling stars. Every dawn is immense in its possibilities. The oppressed cannot be reduced to their enemies either. We must in our mute common substances emancipate both who are locked in fatal combat. ■

'Reflections on Socialist Perspective': A Response

K. K. DASGUPTA

I have read "Reflections on Socialist Perspective" by Kamal Nayan Kabra (*Mainstream*, July 25, 1992 and August 1, 1992) with a lot of attention. My immediate reaction was that it was a good background material for a discussion or symposium. It has tried to analyse the theoretical framework of socialism from different points of view for making it a means to overcome the dangerous consequences of unbridled development on the foundations of a widening 'development-underdevelopment' cleavage. It has also referred to the experiences of the Soviet Union and some other socialist countries of the past, to add strength to the arguments. I must say that I enjoyed reading the paper as an intellectual piece. A few thoughts came to my mind during and after reading which I would like to convey. Some of these have already been expressed by me in print and some have not been. I should appreciate if my response is gone through as a contribution to the suggested debate.

I quite agree with the observation: "The fact that socialism occupies a place in the preamble to India's Constitution and all her political parties swear their allegiance to an undefined 'socialism' or social justice as a legal requirement cannot be wished away as a totally empty symbolism without any substantive and real foundation." (p. 23, *Mainstream,* July 25, 1992) This despite the fact that very little substantive and real foundation is discernible in our social and economic lives. Our people take oath on socialism to represent us without understanding what are its essential constituents in the case of India. Sometimes debates go on in which the principal objective is to define what is true socialism. Such exercises may be partially helpful in locating the 'tree' but our concern mainly is to understand the 'wood' and translate into reality the requirements of its transformation. In my opinion, any form of socialism is welcome to the vast majority of our population with or without socialisation of the means of production. Even at the risk of being branded a 'reactionary', I will not hesitate to state that in the presence of abject poverty, complete lack of social security for almost half of our population, the desirable form of socialism in today's condition is a 'welfare state' even if the prevalent mode in India is capitalism. If socialism comes—when we do not know, if it comes—the experiences of history do not indicate indisputably that this would indeed be the surest means of overcoming the deprivation of the masses because, in the ultimate analysis, the overcoming of deprivation must be in economic, cultural and other spheres together.

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THERE has always been a great emphasis on the validity of the necessitarian path towards leading the transitional phase to socialism. One reason for the emergence of the necessitarian paradigm is that its origin was the industrialised Europe. Hence emancipation was conceived through struggle and later seizure of power by the working class. The other classes were either treated as of peripheral importance or 'awkward' for the continuation of the struggle.

As is well-known, in the necessitarian paradigm, the development of capitalism was a necessary condition; hence the emphasis on the working class. One of the sufficient conditions in the inevitable bipolarised state was the fierce class struggle. The prospect of socialism was bleak in the paradigm for backward economies because Marx had made a very categorical pronouncement when he said : "The country that is more developed industrially only shows to the less developed, the image of its own future." Therefore, even in peasant-dominated economies like India, socialists of the Marxist persuasion laid paramount emphasis on the working class.

I remember that in the seminar on Marx, Schumpeter and Keynes in January, 1984 the question of necessitarian paradigm came up. The late Prof Sukhamoy Chakravarty argued that as far as passage to socialism after developed capitalism was concerned, Marx and Schumpeter had similar prognosis. My reply was that Marx's inclusion of emergent leaps in the march of history as opposed to the evolutionery path foreseen by Schumpeter makes a qualitative difference. I am emphasising this point because even in peasant-dominated societies the advent and development of capitalism were regarded as a must, as a necessity, because Marxists never considered the position of late Marx as it was not a well-researched topic until very recently.

The paper under discussion puts a big question mark on the necessity for going in for rapid industrialisation in socialism in the image of the developed capitalist countries. I agree with this view because this became a fetish with the socialist countries. But development in the present period of economic history cannot preclude industrial development. But if industrialisation becomes the motto at all cost, sacrificing the fulfilment of basic aspiration of men in socialism, serious problems start. In fact, in the famous industrialisation debate of the twenties, the differences between Feld'man, Bazarov, Shanin and Bernstein-Kogan very much centred around these issues. Strumilin, the official economist of the Soviet Union for quite some time from the days of economic planning, agreed on this point. The nineteenth century economists of the school of *narodnichestvo* were not totally opposed to industrialisation. I agree with the contention relating to the crisis due to hackneyed or rather mechanistic understanding of the forms of contents of socialist development.

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IN this connection I would like to add one observation which I consider important and have mentioned in my writings. A substantial part of the present crisis in socialism arose due to rigidity and the oppressive character of the superstructure. Reforms have always been attempted in the economy but never in the superstructure.

As a result, a socialist counterpart existed in an 'unfree' environment of decades. As we know, whenever these questions were articulated in *samizdat* publications, there used to be the opportunitistic explanation on the foundation of Marx's famous explanation of the base-superstructure nexus. The socialist leadership has contended a number of times that if the base becomes rational through reforms, the superstructure will also become rational.

As I have emphasised in my book, Marx made it very clear that base *conditions and does not determine* the superstructure and that also *in general (uberhaupt)* and not in each concrete case. Many were concerned with the need of reform in the superstructure in the Soviet Union and other erstwhile socialist countries of Europe as an essential component of a dialectical resolution of the conflict between base with a continuous process of reform and a reformless superstructure. The first attempt in the recent past in this regard made socialism in a segment of the world redundant. The lesson that we can take from this catastrophe is that *temporal relevance is extremely important in the reform of the superstructure.* That is why *glasnost* even at the highest level could not preserve socialism in Eastern Europe excepting one or two countries. It led to negative results because of prevalance of 'open' or 'hidden' commandism in every sphere of life and also *glasnost* came late.

When the waves of freedom inundated the *non-socialist* edifice of hitherto existing socialist countries there were manifestations of such distortions that the foundation which existed in the name of socialism collapsed. This is the price the hitherto existing socialism in Eastern Europe had to pay for creating a genuine climate of freedom. The question is: which one should be opted for—a regimented and stultifying environment for everyone with privileges for the power elite and the *nomenklatura* to preserve the so-called socialism or welcome the unexpected outcome of *glasnost*? I have emphasised the above point so much because I believe that the issue of freedom in the superstructure has been ignored by students of socialist economics.

The statement—"Thus it cannot be maintained that socialism is the only path for developing the productive forces, even by late-developers" (p. 27, *Mainstream*, July 25, 1993)—required further elaboration although I agree in general with the contention. My understanding, on which I generally agree with the formulation in the article is that if history has demonstrated that some of the late-developers could reach certain stage of development by embracing socialism, the converse may be/is not true. A pertinent question on the subject is: assuming that capitalism could well be an appropriate mode for development of late-developing countries would it be unbridled capitalism reminiscent of the nineteenth century Europe with no concern for the human elements of society or a properly worked out amalgam of capitalist private property of means of production in general with strong welfare components? In the presence of sufficient government control through economic planning in a country, like India, I never understood how this solution was never understood or worked out.

If this is done, then it will be an endeavour to establish a form of socialist practice which is the need of the hour. It has to be realised that the socialist content in the economic practice does not exhaust itself by some demarche of nationalisation even if it is serious. Rather, even in its absence, the socialist elements may become prominent, if it is a choice between one or the other. This argument seems paradoxical but if the issue of transcendence of alienation of the economic subjects from the minimum conditions of existence is to be given serious consideration, this 'paradox' rather posits itself as a dialectrical manifestation of two apparently contradictory forces of *capitalist form and socialist content* for a forward push rather than a society antinomy.

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THE paper has correctly pointed out the somewhat irrational emphasis on Department I. This is again a mechanical pursuit of Marxian analysis of the dynamics of capitalist development for translation of the relevant parts into reality in socialism. I am quite convinced, however, that the socialist theoreticians and practitioners successfully employed various facets of the Marxian framework to examine and explain the economics of socialism. They identified the supra-institutional specificities of this paradigm although originally it was intended to fathom the 'laws of motion of capitalism'. But while doing so they have given an exaggerated importance on Department I by mechanically following Marx's conclusion on the dependence of Department II on Department I in the reproduction scheme. This led to the mechanical formulation of the 'Law of the primacy of the production of the means of production over that of means of consumption' as one of the more important basic economic laws of socialism.

I am now referring to the statement: "If the socialist countries go in for replicating the same kind of technology as the Western capitalist countries have generated and adopted, they would be creating self-defeating anachromisms manfested in consumerism, in the process of building a socialist society." (p. 28, *Mainstream*, July 25, 1992) This statement needs further elaboration because many facets of technological development could be supra-institutional. If a socialist programme believes in the undesirability of experimenting with certain aspects of technological development for attaining definite socialist goals, there is nothing to prevent employing those facets of technological development which are relevant. This is the supra-institutional component of technological progress. Of course, any programme of socialist development has to start from the 'given' and the 'ought to'.

About the dehumanising effects of technological development on which Marx made elaborate analysis in his 'Machinery and Modern Industry' in *Capital I* and also in *EPM* while talking on different forms of alienation, I would argue that what Marx wanted to point out was that in a particular 'social relations' dehumanising effects of technology will be pronounced. In the social relations of socialism, dehumanisation should not emerge. Also, collapse of socialism in many countries in the recent past was not due to problems assoicated with technology in the main.

I agree with the position in the paper on the problems created by the slogan of 'catching up' with the West. But I differ on the basic goal of the slogan which was to create industrial and defence potential to withstand the onslaught of the ideologically hostile West. The problems arose and became quite critical because the methods followed were contrary to what is expected of socialist economic practice.

The experiment with social planning which the paper has pointed out did not record much success where it was most seriously tried. My research on this theme has convinced me that the oft-repeated statement of Yugoslav theoreticians that *social planning* was a mechanism for ensuring 'de-etasiation' and 'decentralisation' to pave the way for transcendence of alienation of people of socialist Yugoslavia was more a wishful thinking. That does not, however, mean that we should not attempt a newer type of social planning. In fact, in the famous Novosibirsk Report of 1983, T.I. Zaslavskaya created a sensation in the world by emphasising the imperative need for a planning in which the economic and social dimensions were combined. ■

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Everything Is Not So Rosy!

BATUK VORA

The long march to prosperity through market-oriented economic reforms is not only full of world-shaking achievements but also full of new, critical pitfalls like fast-spreading corruption, drug-smuggling and crime in China. This long march is hampered also because the reforms are bringing mixed blessings to workers and peasants: China watchers observe that everyone in China was relatively poor before the reforms and disparity between rich and poor was small, but now there are many people living at both extremes.

Reports on "overheating" of economy are pouring in from China. This implies rising inflation and other negative aspects of fast growth. Regional protectionism because of imbalances, growing hostile relations between the central and fast-marching eastern coast provincial governments, weakening public sector (reduced now to 50 per cent of the total product generated), one-third of public units admitted to be in the red, accumulating unrest due to widespread retrenchment from public units and consequent halt to their social security, medical and housing benefits—are only some of the new, difficult problems.

The most surprising fact that should be noted is China's highly competent statistics department which is putting out reels and reels of figures on everything in the American fashion. This is evident from the pages of the Chinese media.

According to an official from the Supreme People's Procuratorate, 48,000 cases of graft and bribery in the first seven months of 1992 were registered. The list included about 7600 major cases, each involving more than 10,000 Yuan ($1800). Nearly $44 million were recovered after investigations from them.

In Shenzhen city alone, a city close to Hong Kong and booming with foreign ventures and rapid growth, 426 cases of disciplinary and legal violations involving Party members and officials were registered. The Party disciplinary body alone dealt with 181 cases. Among those expelled from the Party, prostitution patrons made up a large proportion. Thirty million Yuan ($5.3 million) were recovered from them. Gao Senxiang, the former President of the Shenzhen branch of the Industrial Bank of China, was executed last year for taking a huge bribe. The Mayor's hotline, set up for the people to complain against corruption, registered 27,900 calls. In line with this device to get criminals nabbed, 80 per cent of the major Chinese metropolises have now the police hotline using the 110 number.

The author, a senior journalist who was a Leftist MLA in Gujarat, is currently based in California (USA) where he functions as a free-lance correspondent.

The Chinese police arrested more than 500L railway crooks last year in a crackdown. They included train robbers, wire thieves and other criminals. The *Legal Daily* reported that 436 gangs that prey on passenger trains and telecommunication lines were smashed. Some 1000 officials were dispatched to conduct the investigations in 2300 railroad police stations. Seizure of contraband and stolen goods in 980 cases was also reported.

About 2000 criminals were involved in making and selling fake drugs, according to *China Consumers' News.* Imitation of products from 189 state pharmaceutical factories was reported. "Various cases demonstrated that the fight against embezzlement and bribes will be a long-term one and complicated," said the Procurator-General, Liu Fuzhi, in the last session of the National People's Congress.

He said his department handled 81,110 cases of embezzlement and bribery in 1991, a slight decrease over 1990. Criminals investigated included 5300 *beg* officials of the government. He admitted that these criminals had disrupted the management of enterprises and even pushed many enterprises to the brink of bankruptcy.

More than 8000 suspected drug-smugglers were arrested last year, with 866 of them being put to death or jailed for life. The National Narcotics Control Commission revealed that 2400 cases with 662 kg of heroin, 301 kg of opium and 250 kg of marijuana were uncovered in the first three months of this year alone.

Further, Beijing papers reported that within a two-month crackdown there, the police arrested 1628 criminal suspects and seized 2808 firearms, broke up 445 organised criminal gangs and solved

860 cases during the same period. China made about 2.2 million arrests from 1988 to 1992! We have yet to hear about some Indian crackdown in big cities like Bombay and Calcutta.

In another area of fight against crime, more than 162,000 government officials were dismissed, demoted or warned in the past five years for various crimes. Since the Ministry of Supervision resumed operations in 1987 after a hiatus of 20 years, they have heard 719,000 cases of corruption such as receiving bribes, embezzlement and dereliction of duty.

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DESCRIBING yet another serious problem, the *Outlook* weekly reported recently that the nation has 2100 provincial level government organisations—an average of 70 per province—which are just a drain on the government as they are surplus. Fifteen million workers on the government pay roll were surplus in 1979 and that figure more than doubled to 34 million in 1991, an annual increase of more than one million!

On the economic front, according to the *China Daily*, urban residents worry more about their salary, housing and social security than the reforms and long-term benefits of growth. Nearly half of the urban population has shown extreme discontent about their current income level. Prices are rising sharply in 1993 and if the reforms of the labour and personnel systems fail to be paralleled with the establishment of social security system, the social stability will be in danger.

There are signs of tremendous increase in "floating population". The successful village enterprise system that absorbs about 100 million rural labour has its own limit. The coastal provinces are attracting a large number of rural people. This migration continues underground, not openly as in India, because every citizen in China is supposed to have an identification card indicating their official residence and they are not supposed to move to an urban area without government approval. This is putting added pressure on the strained rail-transport system. China does not have as elaborate a rail system and elaborate bus transportation facility as in India.

Further, traditional social values are no longer as morally binding to new modernised middle classes as before. People who snatch money from the helpless and needy are increasing everywhere. One cannot imagine how some few hundred West-crazy youngsters from Fujia were victims of a human smuggling ring recently in April and May 199; transported all the way to America in cargo vessels through months of sea travel without basic facilities, by fleecing them of $30,000 each for this job! They are asking political asylum here in America on the ground that the Chinese Government is too harsh in implementing its family planning policy with one child per family in urban areas and it is the "violation of human right"! The US media is making an unnessary hue and cry over this episode. The flow of illegal Chinese immigrants is continuing.

Rural women face a double bind: regulation restricted them to two children, while husbands and families pressured them to have more, boys in particular, to increase family farm labour.

Economic crimes are on the rise. The involvement of government officials in profit-making in public enterprises is a major source of corruption. With more and more local authorities legalising officials' involvement in private commercial ventures, contingents of officials-turned-merchants are growing rapidly. The Party and government-run companies have witnessed a new boom after retrenchments of the later 1980s.

It is reported that 70 per cent of the local Party and government officials in the Hunan province established various private enterprises till the end of last year. The excuse is magnificent—to become financially self-reliant and relieve the state's financial burden!

A trend to protect anyhow the "iron rice bowl" is still prevalent. Iron rice bowl prevailed before the reforms when the state took care of everybody from the cradle to the grave. This is breaking and the state itself is no more subscribing to that theory. A "safety belt" was offered instead in all current experiments—most of those transferred to such entities are still recognised as government officials. Their administrative ranks and wage scales remain intact. There is no set deadline to end these 'safety-belt' practices. The government officials are permitted to resign or retain their ranks while having their wages suspended to undertake commercial ventures. In many cases they are allowed to hold concurrent jobs in the business enterprises they have built.

There is a kind of "company fad" fast catching up among the Chinese salaried class. Such "administrative companies" run by the government officials play the role of planner and coordinator in certain fields of local economies, according to observers, which is more like a transfer than a nctional transition.

This is leading to local monopolising of certain local resources. Some fear that officials taking advantage in commercial competition might lead to a comeback of *Guandao* (commercial speculation used by officials), which was a target of public unrest during the Tiananmen events in 1989.

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A serious debate within the Chinese Communist Party is raging whether to go step-by-step, slow on eforms or to continue the speed in economic rowth that China has become famous for in esent times. "Going to extremes is harmful to the forms"—screeched a headline recently in the *hina Daily.* While China's political structure and ommand economy are still under one party control, a new monied class—largely within the circles of Party *nomenklutura*—has come into being. Common people see this with "red eye" (jealousy) and this could be a cause for future trouble.

The Chinese leadership is faced with two lternatives as to where to lead the economy. One ay is to create a fully capitalist economy, by minating planning altogether, and giving private arkets complete control over labour, capital and tural resources. Both farmland and factories ould have to be completely privatised. Over a me, China could revert to a nation with two althy classes, rural landlords and urban capitalists, d two poor classes—the farm labour and factory rkers plus an assortment of other classes in between.

The other choice is to go for a new form of democratic socialism. Combining farmers into cooperatives, as the present individual private small farms offer no choice for mechanised farming, and factories to be handed over to the workers to own and manage. Managers today behave as if they own those factories and manage accordingly, thus coming into clash with the workers. The government can continue planning in both agriculture and industry and can also permit the markets for the istribution of output above the planned amounts.

Presently, what is under attack by the dominant section of leadership in China is "Leftism". Any talk of halting this series of market-oriented reforms is being criticised. "Socialism must be reformed, otherwise it will have no future," said China's paramount leader, Deng Xiaoping. From 1957 onwards, China had turned onto a "wrong track",—Leftism. Class struggle became the key, eventually resulting in the "cultural revolution" (1966-76), revealing the political, economic, ethical and cultural problems of a socialist management system. It was after 1979 that China launched a series of socialist market reforms with "Chinese characteristics". This saved it from the kind of economic disaster that overtook other Soviet bloc nations.

Fourteen years of steady reforms and fast growth also generated corruption and crime and widening disparity disturbing the social stability itself. The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences admitted in a special report this year that "the possibility of some regional and small-scale social unrest does exist". The high growth rate of 12 per cent in 1992 has aroused many people's concerns. The government too is worried whether and how a new round of "boom and bust" could be avoided. The 1989 unrest, culminating in the Tiananmen events, still haunts the Chinese leadership. ☐

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Marxism Needs Innovation, Not Mere Renovation

SHARAD PATIL

Satyapal Dang's paper "Marxism Needs Renovation, Not Mere Reassertion" (*Mainstream*, June 26, 1993), is deeply moving. But will it move the CPI-M leadership to which it is directed? Stalin had silenced the then French ambassador by the question: "How many battalions does the Pope have?" Likewise the CPI-M leadership considers its strength to be the vindication of its national and international policy. But does the CPI have any different notion though it is weaker than its big brother?

Class Struggle

Dang blames the communist movement for its exclusive stress on class struggle and neglect of constructive work:

> ...Last but not the least, has not our thesis about the central place occupied by class struggle led to neglect by the Left of such tasks as would be called "constructive work" by Gandhiji, as for example, working for the amelioration of conditions and upliftment of the Scheduled Castes; working against the caste system;...

Dang wants constructive anti-caste work and not its abolition. That is why he holds up Gandhiji for constructively 'working against the caste system' and not Ambedkar who strove to annihilate it.

The insistence of the traditional communist movement on waging only class struggles to the exclusion of anti-caste struggles has led to a split in the Left trade union movement, the caste Hindu workers who are interested only in economic struggles remaining with it by and large and the SC and ST workers forming their separate trade union movement. Not the class alliance of the working class and the peasantry but the caste alliance of the SCs, STs and OBCs is becoming increasingly popular. Nevertheless, the traditional communist movement persists in clinging to exclusive class struggle and still theorising that caste is a superstructural manifestation of class which precludes it from formulating the historical materialism of caste (*varna* and *jati*). In the face of the Brahmanical offensive culminating in the destruction of the Babri mosque, the traditional Marxist methodology has proved to be Brahmanical.

Traditional communist ideologues like S.G. Sardesai have admitted that class struggle cannot lead automatically to the abolition of the caste system. But the persistence, nevertheless, of the traditional communist movement to assume this automatism reveals the Brahmanism that is implicit to assume this automatism reveals the Brahmanism that is implicit in this class methodology.

But there is a vital difference between th Brahmancial methodology of the BJP and that the traditional Communist Parties which has crucial bearing on the present situation. For th former communalism is a means for strengthenin the caste shackles of the Srauta-Smarta Hind religion, while according to the latter Hindu communalism has to be fought without fighting the Hindu religion and its supreme heroes Rama and Krishna. *The inability of the class methodology o Marxism to discern the inseparability of Hind communalism and the casteist Hindu religion fro the separability of other religions and their respecti communalisms is not extraneous but built-in.*

The counter-glorification of Ram by the CPI-MP, Somnath Chatterjee, and the CPI leader, A. Bardhan, and the efforts of both the parties resurrect the caste-defending Vivekananda (se Sekhar bandyopadhyay's *Caste, Politics and t Raj*, p. 123) as a saint of equality, etc., turn t class methodology of Marxism into revivalism.

That is why Marxism has to be innovated and not renovated.

Marxism-Leninism and Methodology

Dang is right in agreeing with 'some Communists' who thought that "it was wrong to convert Marxism into 'Marxism-Leninism' and this had caused a lot of damage". No elaboration is given.

Marx gave central place to his philosophy of dialectical and historical materialism. It is only through this philosophical tool that he fashioned his economics and scientific socialism. His philosophy can be called Marxism-Leninism only if Lenin ha made a fundamental contribution to it. Engels and Lenin were great commentrators of Marx's philosophy, and the fundamental contributions the made were in other fields like economics, history etc. In contradistinction to them, Mao was a philosopher in his own right who gave a definition of the two types of contradictions: antagonistic and non-antagonistic which was contrary to the one given by Marx and Lenin. I have proved in my as yet unpublished paper "Lenin, Mao and Basavapunnaiah on Contradictions: Antagonistic and Non-antagonistic" (1983) that Mao's definition is dialectical as against the metaphysical one given by Marx and Lenin and helps us to conclude that non-class contradictions like caste also can be as antagonistic and revolutionary as class. Though my paper was the only rejoinder to M. Basavapunnaiah's paper in the Marx centenary issue of *Social Scientist* it was not published, which shows the undemocratic and Brahmanical attitude of the CPI-M leadership. It is also worth noting that though all Naxalite groups still adhere dogmatically to Mao, not a single one of them has paid any attention to [illegible]'s contribution to Marxist philosophy. The reasons of Basavapunnaiah's fanatical opposition to Mao's contribution and the reluctancce of the Naxalites to recognise it are not far to seek. First, all traditional Communists consider Marx's philosophy to be the last word in philosophy as a whole. Secondly, it is their implicit, but nonetheless firm, understanding, that philosophy is created or creatively developed only by outstanding persons from elite classes and castes. Hence how can a Chinese Sudra dabble in el[illegible] m[illegible] This elitist attitude was proved to be Brahmanical when E.M.S. Namboodiripad wrote in his paper entitled "Castes, Classes and Parties in Modern Political Development", published in *Social Scientist* (November 1977) that "upper class elements from these non-Hindu religious communities, together with the upper classes of Hindu society, became the co-creators of a genuinely Indian civilisation". My rejoinder, proving that Indian civilisation was created by all castes and classes and both the sexes of all Indian religions, was not published by the journal run by the CPM.

The Naxalites are working self-sacrificingly at the grassroots and hence some of the Naxalite groups have accepted the reality of caste. Nonetheless, these groups are evading the necessity of formulating the *programme* of caste abolition and clinging to the dogmatic notion that it is not at all necessary to go beyond the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideological framework. In order to guard against Brahmanical contamination, K.G. Satyamurthy has dropped all upper caste members from the State Committee of his Marxist-Leninist Centre. Groups like the People's War Group are more worried about 'preserving' their separate identity than forming a front to fight communalism and the caste system. The IPF, opposing reservation and anti-caste struggle, calls Ambedkar a 'separatist' and a 'social reformer' and not a revolutionary and claims that there is "growing emergence of leaders and *theoreticians* from their (Harijans and other oppressed sections) ranks" following the IPF.

It is still believed that international gatherings of traditional Communist Parties, like the ones held in Calcutta and Britain, will be able to find a way out of the international crisis of Marxism, as if collective deliberations can take the place of objective and fearless research and analysis. Mohit Sen complains that the CPI-M excluded other Communist Parties, as if that would have made a difference. This, of course, is not in justification of the CPI-M's claim of the monopoly of Marxist wisdom. Such international and national gathering will bear fruit only if there is a willingness to innovate Marxism and not just to renovate or reassert it.

Dictatorship of the Proletariat

Those Communist Parties which have 'dropped' the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat have thrown away the baby with the bathwater. Lenin was correct in reaffirming Marx's concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat in his *The State and Revolution*:

> It is often said and written that the core of Marx's theory is the class struggle; but this is not true. And from this error very often springs the opportunist distortion of Marxism, its falsification to make it acceptable to the bourgeoisie. For the doctrine of class struggle was created *not* by Marx, but by the bourgeoisie*before* Marx, and generally speaking it is *acceptable* to the bourgeoisie. Only he is Marxist who *extends* the acceptance of the class struggle to the acceptance of the *dictatorship of the proletariat* This is where the profound difference lies between a Marxist and an ordinary petty (and even big) bourgeois...

Proletarian dictatorship was a means to safeguard the nascent socialst state from the national and international counter-revolution and to *build* socialist democracy during the transitional period of the dictatorship. Dictatorship and democracy and essentially a temporary unity of opposites. But the ruling Communist Parties laboured under two mistaken notions: 1) that the unity of opposites was a permanent one, and 2) that socialist democracy was a repetition of the *perfect* democracy of primitive communism. Marxists world over, and especially in India, are still not prepared to realise that the *ideal* society called primitive communism never existed though it has been disproved even by Marxist anthropologists like Maurice Bloch. What existed was a tribal society, which in its different stages of development went through different unities of equality and inequality. I have demonstrated this in my *Dasa-Sudra Slavery*. But Romila Thapar has now come out with her theory of kinship through which she tries to prove that no tribal society ever existed anywhere in the world and R.S. Sharma supports her. *This obviates the need for making an objective study of tribal democracy in its different stages of development, as for example, gynocracy, matrilineal and patrilineal rajakas, a-rajaka, etc. in comparison with capitalist democracy in order to arrive at a historically and dialectically correct synthesis of socialist democracy.* In the absence of such a synthesised conception of socialist democracy, Gorbachev switched over from dictatorship to *bourgeois* democracy.

Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya has shown in his *Religion and Society* (1987) that according to recent researches Christ, supposed to be an apostle of non-violence and non-resistance, was on the point of leading an armed insurrection of the poor in which he was betrayed and executed. (pp. 7-12) The inevitable conclusion that emerges is that he wished to establish a democratic dictatorship of the slaves, ex-slaves and indebted peasants. B.R. Ambedkar, still believed to be an apostle of non-violence and constitutionalism, was convinced that the caste system cannot be abolished without "social disturbance and a *violent struggle*". (K.S. Murty, *On Some Views of Dr B.R. Ambedkar*, p. 9). He visualised a democatic dictatorship of the SCs, STs and OBCs led by the SCs (*Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 5, pp. 112-113). *Democratic dictatorship means that the two opposites are not mutually exclusive but interpenetrating. Dictatorship is a means to establish democracy, and after consummating the dialectical process of building up socialist democracy has to pass away for ever.*

The Mental Revolution

Whether socialism means ownership of the *society* or nationalisation of the means of production as it is literally taken to be, or something more than that, is being widely debated after the fall of socialism in Europe. The dialectical unity of base and superstructure is still not being taken into proper consideration by the countries which have manged to preserve their socialist facade.

In the pre-revolutionary mental transformation or enlightenment the task is to change man mentally so that he may be able to consummate the impending social revolution, while in post-revolutionary mental transformation the task is to so change man that he may consciously build socialism. *Rosa Luxemburg correctly said that socialism cannot be built by party fiats but by the uninhibited andd creative participation of the people of a socialis state whose mental and physical abilities come in greater and greater play through an ever burgenoni socialist democracy.* Democracy is rarely built fro above. It is very difficult to find a second Buddha i this matter. Socialist democracy has to be built brick by brick from below. Neverthelss, pioneering work in this respect has to be done by humane and enlightened leaders and cadres. Dang has correctly pointed out that the process of post-revolutionary mental metamorphosis is long drawn out:

> Marxism takes note of the human nature but does not consider it to be immutable. It concedes that along with other essential preconditions the change towards a completely selfless man will take a very long time to come about, and without this change the transition from socialism to communism would just not be possible...

Gandhiji was a selfless man, but still a representative of the upper caste-classes. Socialist man should be individually good and socially eve progressive. Leave aside the Communist ma even a socialist man could not be built by the ex socialist countries during the relatively long period available to them.

Philosophy is the most basic level of mental change. man undergoes voluntary change only after conviction and philosophical conviction is the most convincing and lasting. But international Marxism has refused to absorb the tremendous developmen in philosophy during the post-Marx period, dubbing it as bourgeois. Christopher Caudwell's efforts to uptodate Marxist philosophy were run down as a heresy. The main implement of philosophy to carry conviction is epistemology. The Brahmanical *Nyay Vaiseshikas* used their reflectionist epistemology vindicate the caste system, while the Buddhis *Sautrantika Vijnanavadins* used their epistemological division of *nir-vikalpaka* perception and *sa-vikalpaka* inference to refute the caste system. I have demonstrated this in my as yet unpublished paper "Dharmakirti and Our Times" (1981).

The study of the subconscious is essential for mental transformation. Though Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was the first in the West to put the study of the subconscious on a scientific footing, Arnold Toynbee and Daisaku Ikeda have pointed out in their *Choose Life* that the Buddhist *Vijnanavadins* (AD 400 onwards) had fashioned an epistemological tool (*Yogajapratyaksha*) to fathom the subconscious. (pp. 26-30) Toynbee enumerates the benefits conferred by the subconscious on mankind:

> ...The subconscious is undoubtedly the source of poetry and of religious insight. It is the source, too, of all emotions and impulses. The ethical judgement that we make at the

> el of consciousness distinguishes between good and d-emotions and impulses. The deeper into the bconscious that we succeed in carrying our sciousness, the greater becomes the extent of our scious control over our emotions and impulses...

da points out that "hypnotism, which was regarded as a fraud, not a science, has now lished itself as a powerful method of otherapy". All insights are products of the nscious. *Music, the most abstract of all arts, roduced by the subconscious.* An ordinary lent in life impelled a writer like Tolstoy to write *surrection. The unrolling of an incident or ggestion into a full length work of art is the work f the subconscious. Hence, all works of art by and large are the products of the subconscious.*

◆

have already delineated in my Marathi book, *Who ere the Real Enemies of Shivaji's Hindavi Swaraj: uhammadi or Brahmans* (1992), that the gynocratic *ntra* impelled the foremost representatives ualitarian struggles. I am going to elaborate and bstantiate it in my Vol. II, entitled *Feudal Sudra rvitude.* P.V. Kane says in his *History of rmasastra* that great poets, scholars and writers Vidyapati had "a sneaking admiration for trika worship". (Vol. V, P. II, pp. 1013-1077) great aesthete Abhinavagupta (+1000) was a la, that is, a Tantrika. The 84 siddhas (AD 700-0), belonging to all non-Brahmanical religions sects, were Tantrikas.Buddhist philosophers Asvaghosha (+200) to Santarakshita (+800) Tantrikas. All these and other followers of the *a* did not know the historicity of gynocracy but me religiously conscious of it.

stablished ethical judgements are usually ogressve. *Othello* is based on the murderous archal envy of Othello. As against this envy did enter in the polyandrous relation of the Pandavas Draupadi. But gynocracy was the rule of men over men, and that is why it was not based sexual equality. Hence, socialist sexuality cannot based on gynocracy, but genuine synthesised xual equality in which the most important ntributory factors should be Tantrism and minism.

As shown by Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya in his *nin the Philosopher* (1979), the epistemology of arxist philosophy is reflectionist. This epistemology as initially taken over by mechancial materialism rom realism which is called *bahya-artha-vada* in Indian philosophy. Buddha's philosophy should be alled dialectical realism. The Brahmancial *Nayaya-Vaiseshikas* are called *bahyarthavadins* in Indian philosophy. When the *Nyaya-Vaiseshikas* mounted their realistic attack on the Buddhist realism, Buddhist philosophers had to meet it by resorting first to *Sunya-vada* (Nagarjuna) and then the *Vijnanavada* (Asanga and Vasubandhu) and finally to *Sautrantika Vijnanavada* (the Dignaga School). Thus it becomes clear that non-Brahmanical realism could not withstand Brahmanical realism and hence the former had to resort to non-Brahmanical dialectical idealism. That is the philosophical reason why the class realistic epistemology of Marxism turned into Brahmanical epistemology in India.

Secondly, the reflectionist epistemology of Marxist philosophy excludes the vital role of the subconscious and hence the dialectical relationship between consciousness and subconsciousness is not studied. *That is why I say that Marxism is a philosophy of physical change and not of the mental one, and hence Marxism-Phuley-Ambedkarism had to fashion a new epistemology which I call dialectical in my as yet unpublished paper "Conflict Between the Reflectionist Epistemology of Marxist Philosophyy and the Dialectical Acquisition of Knowledge" (1982).*

The basic difference between the socialist man and the Communist one, according to me, is that the former will have to be 'moulded' while the latter will be 'born' in it like the gynocratic polyandrous *man* without the sense of 'mine' and 'thine'. But this does not preclude the struggle to *become* a Communist man in the fuller and fuller sense of the term. ▣

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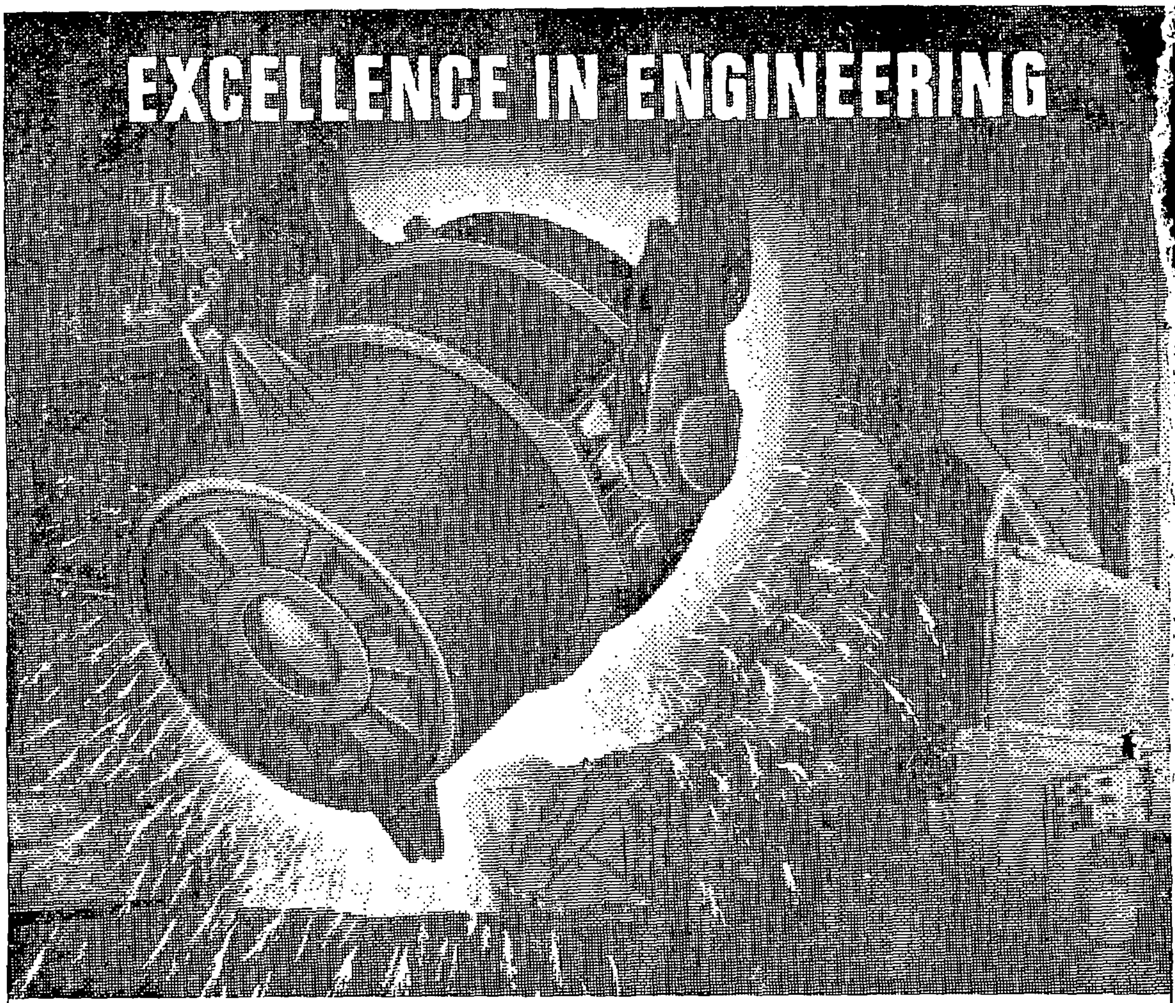

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